



# 7

## CHAPTER

# India's Relationship with Nepal

## HISTORICAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INDIA AND NEPAL

### Is Buddhism a problem between India and Nepal?

It is a globally accepted fact that Buddha was born in Lumbini, Nepal. However, India often claims that Buddha is an apostle of peace and Buddhism is a philosophy about which India is proud of. Nepal perceives these assertions of India as an attempt to hijack their heritage. This is incorrect because the objective of India is to emphasise on a common shared heritage of India and Nepal.

The relationship between India and Nepal goes back to the times of the rule of the Sakya clan and Gautama Buddha. Feudalism in Nepali society came to its origin in Licchavis. From 750 AD to 1750 AD was a period when Nepal came under Mowari rule and they consolidated their presence in Kathmandu. This time period also saw a shift from Buddhism to Hinduism in Nepal and witnessed widespread cultural diffusion. In the 12th century, during the Malla period and the rule of Yakshamanas in Nepal, the two nations reached their cultural zenith. The early 1700s witnessed a change in the Nepalese power structure. The subsequent period witnessed both monarchical and prime ministerial rule. In 1846, Jung Bahadur Kunwar established a dynastic rule for the Prime Minister, known as the 'Rana'. The Rana rule took hold and continued in Nepal till 1951. Though the Rana regime was not very efficient, it did contribute to social developments in the field of schools and education. In the 1920s, as the Indian freedom struggle progressed, many educated Nepalese people came to India and partook in the struggle and with inspiration from Indian National Congress, they formed the Nepali Congress (NC). The Nepali elite and Nepali Congress subsequently launched a movement in Nepal and succeeded in ousting the Rana rule.

## INTERNAL GOVERNANCE OF NEPAL AND PERCEPTION OF INDIA

### The RSS in Nepal

It is interesting to know that Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah made Nepal a Hindu state under the 1962 constitution he gave for the country and subsequently assumed the title of Vishwa Hindu Samrat or Hindu emperor of the world. Tulsi Giri, the first Prime Minister under the party-less Panchayat system and a member of Indian RSS was instrumental in making Nepal a Hindu Pashtra.

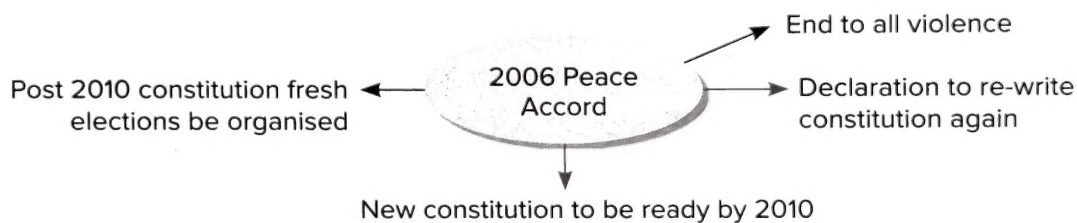
In 1951, after the ousting of the Rana rule, the monarchy continued to dominate Nepalese politics. Three important kings with respect to this period of Nepalese history are King Tribhuvan, Mahendra and Birendra. In the elections that were held in Nepal in 1951, Nepali Congress party (hereafter referred to as NC) won. The period from 1951 to 1959 witnessed the King, Tribhuvan Bir Bikram Shah, and thereafter, his successor, Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah, and the NC struggle to control Nepal. The situation was not stable due to the insecurity of the king as the king wanted to retain his power and was not keen on sharing power with new democratic elements such as the NC. In 1959, the confrontation between the King, Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah, and the NC reached a point where the king declared NC as corrupt, removed it from power and subsequently installed a party-less Panchayat system. This system was such where people would elect their representatives but the King would wield actual power. Thus, a highly centralised rule began from 1960. The period of party-less Panchayat system witnessed protests from NC and other sections of society. The protests finally culminated in the first Jan Andolan in Nepal in 1990.



During this time, the King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah, divested of any other options, brought back democracy and a new government under the NC was formed. During the rule of the NC in Nepal in the period after 1990, there was not much progress witnessed on the developmental front. In 1994 Unified Marxist Leninist Party (UML) which had got support from China tried to generate an anti-India feeling in Nepal. The UML began to assert that the NC is in reality controlled by Congress party of India. This led to a perception amongst the Nepali people about India's control and interference over Nepal and its internal affairs through the NC. The anti-India plan worked in favour of UML and they succeeded in capturing power for a short period of 9 months in Nepal. The UML was removed and the NC assumed power again in 1994. The subsequent period not only saw civil unrest but also witnessed the development projects of Nepal suffer. The civil unrest was fuelled by China, which, over a period of time, evolved into civil uprising and took an ideological turn to Maoism. The Maoist movement in Nepal became fully manifested by 2005. Perceiving the unrest and violence in society, King Gyanendra dissolved the Parliament again. This dissolution of the Parliament caused massive protests, ultimately leading to the second Jan Andolan-II in 2005.

## FORMATION OF NEPALI CONSTITUTION 2015

The Jan Andolan-II led to a signing of a Peace Accord in 2006. An interim constitution was prepared in 2007.



As mentioned, the 2006 Peace Accord planned that Nepal would establish the new constitution by 2010. However, by 2010, the constitution was not ready. It got delayed due to two key issues. The first related to the succeeding form of government. Maoists favoured the Presidential system while others favoured Parliamentary system. The second issue related to federalism. Maoists favoured ethnic federalism while others rejected the idea. Another important factor that delayed the constitutional development was Madhesi assertion. Madhesis are people living in South of Nepal in the region of Terai. They are people living close to the border of India. Pahadis or the people living in the upper reaches of Nepal have always discriminated the Madhesis. In fact, the discrimination against Madhesis at one point of time, was so intense by Pahadis that if a Madhesi citizen wanted to visit Kathmandu, they had to apply for a permit. The Muluki Ain or national code has established the practice to the extent that there was a time when a brahmin could not be given a death sentence but only exiled. The Madhesis, through their representation, demanded rights in the new constitution. After tremendous delays, Nepal finally accepted a constitution in September 2015.

### The Nepalis Identity

In Nepal, the brahmins and chhetris are the two divine groups that regulate the society. The two collectively dominate the army and politics of the state.

## ASSESSMENT OF NEPALESE CONSTITUTION 2015 AND INDIA'S APPROACH TO THE NEW CONSTITUTION

Nepal is governed according to the Constitution of Nepal, which came into effect on 20 September 2015, replacing the Interim Constitution of 2007. The then constitution, which was its seventh, took almost nine years in the making. Nepal has alleged that India did not "welcome" the Nepali Constitution promulgated by the Constituent Assembly but merely "noted" it. What makes this 2015 constitution different from the previous six constitutions is that monarchs wrote old constitutions and an elected Constituent Assembly (CA) writes this seventh one. The new Constitution has been written by politicians and not by Jurists and legal luminaries. It has adopted a rights-based framework, which is high on promises. The CA mechanism was adopted to ensure that the diverse social and ethnic groups of Nepal come together on a platform and work on rules to be made for the entire society. The CA aimed to have an inclusive order with all groups on board.



economy. The open border has given rise to criminality. Today, criminals of both nations use each other's territory for refuge making it tough for law enforcement agencies to track and catch criminals. There have been numerous cases of drug trafficking, gold smuggling, human trafficking and illegal arms trade that have been reported. Though closing the border is no solution, better management of the border areas are required. A Cross Border Crime Control Action Plan can be prepared and jointly enforced. Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) can be empowered with modern technology and also empowered under the Passport Act to arrest criminals. In July 2017, the Government of India had given the approval to SSB to establish its own intelligence wing.

### Why Nepal does not like India?

Ironically, Nepal and India are similar in identity, religion, culture, tradition, language and kinship. Yet, Nepal resists us because they are surrounded on three sides by India and they have developed a siege mentality. They have a desire to break away from this; therefore, they try to resist and fight the geography.

## FOUNDATION OF HYDRO-DIPLOMACY BETWEEN INDIA AND NEPAL

Nepal is an upper riparian state which has more than two hundred rivers and has a hydropower generation potential of around 80,000 MW power. However, it has installed a capacity of around 800 MW only. On an average, 15 to 18 hours of power cuts are common throughout the country. Unfortunately, Nepal has not developed its hydropower potential due to a fear that if they undertake hydropower generation, India will assert dominance over the generated hydroelectricity. Despite the fact that India always cites the example of Bhutan–India hydro diplomacy as a successful case to Nepal. Nepal is still reluctant to improve its generation capacity. There are three treaties to regulate our water sharing today.



## KOSI, GANDAK AND MAHAKALI RIVER WATER TREATIES BETWEEN INDIA AND NEPAL

Let us examine each treaty individually. In 1954, India and Nepal signed the India and Nepal Kosi River Treaty. Kosi River causes tremendous flooding and has been also called the Sorrow of Bihar. As per the treaty, the two sides agreed to cooperate to manage Kosi flooding. India, under the treaty, committed to create a low head diversion or a barrage dam, which, through gates, can regulate Kosi's water flow. India constructed the barrage in Nepal and Nepal agreed to give its management rights to India for 99 years. Over a period of time, certain sections in Nepal have brought up some issues pertaining to the Kosi treaty. A section in Nepal feels that barrages have a normal life of 50 years and India getting a lease of 99 years has given India rights to control it for long beyond the need. Certain sections in Nepal also allege that India, while managing the barrage, does not release adequate water for irrigation and during floods, opens the gates, leading to many villages getting submerged completely. A solution to this issue may come forth if both sides undertake a multi-stakeholder negotiation and resolve the issues. In 1959, India and Nepal also signed the India and Nepal Gandak River Treaty. The treaty has 13 Articles and under the treaty, both sides are to utilise water from the Gandak River to generate 20,000 MW electricity. In 1996, both concluded India and Nepal Mahakali Treaty. Under this treaty, India has agreed to undertake the creation of three dams at Sarda, Tanakpur and Pancheshwar. Both sides have agreed to share costs for the dam creation. However, there has been no progress on these projects owing to pending social and environmental impact assessment. Nepal has agreed to complete a Detailed Project Report for the Pancheshwar project in 2023.

## SUSTA RIVER IRRITANT BETWEEN INDIA AND NEPAL

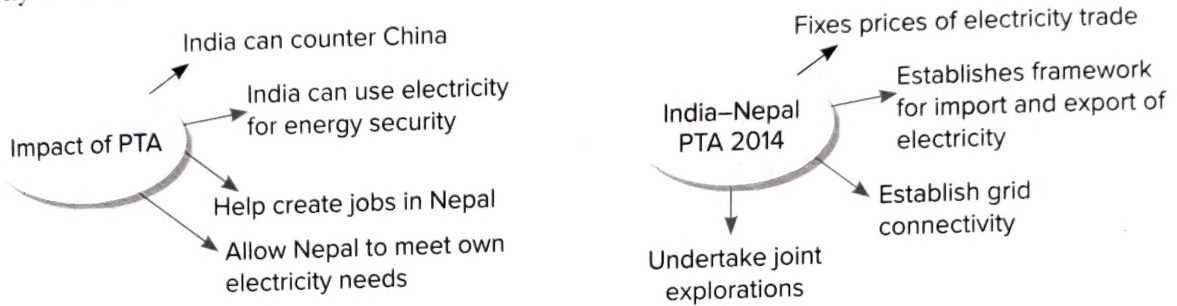
Similarly, Susta is an issue between the two states. The problem in Susta arises due to shifting of the course of the river. India has often asserted that Nepali people have illegally occupied the lands of Susta and Narsahi in Bihar. The Nepali



people have encroached these two areas by resorting to construction activities and also settling own Nepali population here. The best mechanism to deal with Susta is to accept shifting border as the river shifts or agree on a fixed border despite the shifting course of the river.

## POWER COOPERATION AGREEMENT BETWEEN INDIA AND NEPAL

In 2014, India and Nepal concluded a Power Cooperation Agreement (PCA; also called Power Trading Agreement or PTA). Under the PCA, nine articles are concluded and it has been decided to have a review of PCA after 10 years. The agreement shall be valid for 50 years. Under the PCA, Nepal would give license to Indian firms to undertake 28 surveys in Nepal to explore 8000 MW power generations. By 2021, GMR would establish a plant in Karnali to export 900 MW electricity to India.



## THE ROTI-BETI KA RISHTA AND THE CIVILISATIONAL CONNECT

The people of India and Nepal have roti-beti ka rishta. This term, used by Indian political class for Nepal, signifies the deep people-to-people ties between the two sides. In 1952, Nepal Citizenship Act was passed and it allowed the citizens of India to take up citizenship of Nepal with much ease. The law was later amended in 1962. The Indian women hailing from Uttarakhand, Sikkim, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, have a long tradition of matrimonial ties, with people of Nepal. Upon the marriage, when the Indian woman renounces her Indian citizenship, she would automatically acquire a Nepali citizenship. But a cold Himalayan breeze seems to be blowing over the Indian and Nepal relations in 2020 and is likely to put the relations into a deep freeze. Under the new law now, the women would have to wait for a period of seven years before acquiring the Nepali citizenship. While the law is not discriminatory for Indian woman because it is universally applicable to all foreigners, but its impact would be felt the most amongst the Indians because they constitute the largest chunk in the foreigner category. If an Indian woman now marries a Nepali man, then with a seven year wait for citizenship, she will be deprived of opening a bank account in Nepal, get a job and inherit property, if need arises. This particular mindset revealed in the amended law is a reflection of distrust in the minds of communist leaders of Nepal who believe that India is driven with a motive to change the demography of Nepal and Nepal is on the path of becoming another Fiji. In fact, this distrust is deeply visible within Nepal also where the Nepali Pahadi people consider the Madhesi people as the fifth column of India. In 1974, when Sikkim was merged with Indian Union, Sikkim had a referendum where even the Nepali people, who had migrated to Sikkim in earlier decades, voted in favour of the merger. This incident too has cemented fears of certain Nepali political elite that India might try to Sikkimise Nepal.

### The Civilisational Touch

Nepal is famous for the Pashupatinath Temple and the Head Priest of the temple is an Indian and as per tradition, he is the only person authorised to touch the holy Shivalinga. Such is the civilisational connect.

## TRADE AND COMMERCIAL DIPLOMACY BETWEEN INDIA AND NEPAL

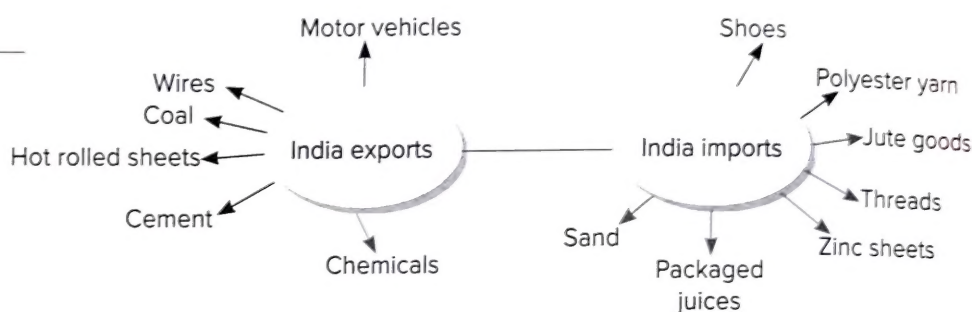
India and Nepal signed a Trade Treaty in 1996, which was revised in 2009. Ninety-five per cent of Nepali trade happens with India. Open border and 22 transit routes facilitate the trade. Raxaul, Tanakpur and Brahmandandi are prominent



### Nepal–India Financial Diplomacy

In 2022, Nepal decided to launch RuPay card, thus opening a new chapter of financial connectivity with India. The launch of the card will now enable the tourists from India to access the ATMs and POS terminals across the nation, thereby adding a new layer to people-to-people relationship.

transit routes. There are more than 150+ Indian firms in Nepal working in manufacturing and services sectors. In 2013, both sides agreed to an Inter-Governmental Commission on Trade under which India has allowed the use of Kolkata port by Nepal for third-country trade and designated customs points have been established. The trade is imbalanced as India exports a majority of things ranging from food products to petroleum products while imports, being negligible, primarily include wood and traditional medicines. Since 1973, as per India and Nepal Petroleum Supply Agreement, India used to supply oil to Nepal via tankers. In 2020, India inaugurated 69-kilometre Barauni–Amlekhgunj oil pipeline, the first South Asian cross-border pipeline, which will carry two million tons of petroleum products annually and replace tanker trade.



## THE CHINESE RELATIONS WITH NEPAL

Contrasting the conventional wisdom, the Chinese have been a dominant player in the international relations of Nepal for a long time. When the British acquired control of India and East India Company began to trade from Calcutta, the Nepali rulers courted China to act as a frontline against British expansion into Nepal. The rulers of Nepal, in their desire to control the British in the plains, and preventing them from acquiring the control of Himalayas, also tried to build an alliance of native Indian rulers. After 1842, when the British won the Opium Wars with the Chinese, the rulers of Nepal realised the changing geopolitics and began to court the British. But, after the 1857 revolt, when the Raj took over the affairs of the company, the Nepali rulers began to enjoy being a British protectorate. It is this dynamic framework that India inherited and has found it difficult to manage till date.

## STRATEGIC AND COMMERCIAL INTERESTS OF CHINA IN NEPAL AND IMPLICATIONS ON INDIA

In 1770, King Prithvi Narayan Shah had rightly called Nepal as a root vegetable between two big boulders and called for balance and equidistance. This has apparently never happened. The basic reason of Chinese presence in Nepal is to ensure that Tibetans (some 20,000 in Nepal) do not use Nepalese territory for breeding of discontent. In the initial years, from 1950s to 1980s, the Chinese tried to build an economic presence in Nepal, which got enhanced tremendously post-1990s. Initially, Chinese remained focused on engaging with Monarchy, but after the dissolution of Monarchy, Chinese have adopted an approach of penetrating every aspect of Nepali public life, from politics to army to bureaucracy. China has increased participation with Nepal at the economic front. For that matter, China has opened up many Mandarin language training schools in the Terai region. Chinese are providing Mandarin language training to Madhesi to ensure that in the near future, the Madhesi emerge as potential labours to work in the ever-expanding Chinese economy. China has made inroads into Nepal in infrastructure, education and health sectors. India feels that the Chinese inroads into Nepal are necessarily to counterbalance the Indian influence in Nepal. Certain sections in the Indian intelligence establishment feel that Maoism in Nepal has been encouraged by China and they have potential links with the Indian Naxalite movement, though this is not an officially-accepted view by the Indian government today. In the recent times, Nepal has made a strong tilt towards China. China is helping Nepal to fill their infrastructure gaps and is trying to position itself as a security provider to Nepal.



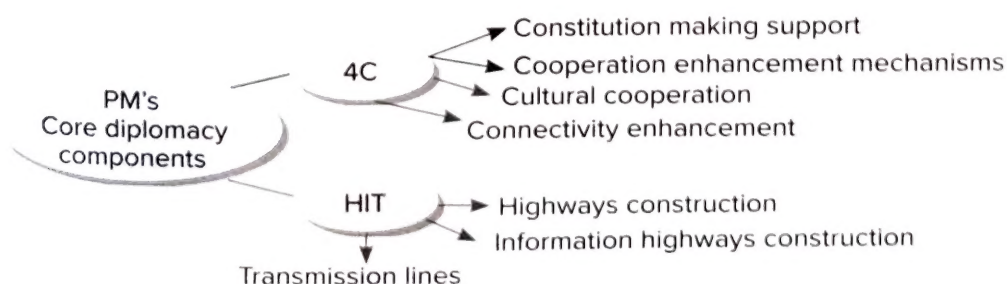
Nepal wants to take advantage of the rail infrastructure built by China in Tibet. Nepal has asserted that its relationship with China is purely economic and will not be hurting the Indian strategic interests in any way. The rising Nepal and China cooperation also signals that Himalayas are not a barrier anymore and for India, a strategy to check the Chinese engagements is required rather than reactions. Chinese strategy is to directly engage with the Nepali politicians and this has led China to build more trust. The China–Nepal relations can be judged from the following facts. At the developmental level, China has unleashed multiple projects. They include Nepal–China Agreement on Transit and Trade, Nepal–China Rail link agreement, Joint Military Exercise Pact, Rasuwagadhi–Syabrubesi Road link. Nepal is a part of Chinese Belt and Road Initiative with an SEZ promised, 1200 MW project on Budhi River by Gezhouba group.

## NEPALESE PARTICIPATION IN BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ON INDIA

In 2019, Xi Jinping visited Nepal and asserted that China would assist Nepal to become a land-linked country from being a land-locked country. In 2020, China had proposed to create a rail link connecting Shigatse on Tibet border to Kathmandu. As China and Nepal are working on Nepal China Economic Corridor, which will bring railway of China till Lumbini; Indian intelligence believes that such a rail link will make Chinese covert and overt presence over Indo-Gangetic plain and will breach the red lines security between India and Nepal. It is important to remember that if China has gained an economic and strategic foothold in Nepal, it is because India has focused too much on geopolitics with Nepal than geo-economics. India has to shed of the mentality of looking at Nepal as a protectorate of a British. It should also allow Nepal to decide what they need and what is good for them and should tune its strategy appropriately than asserting that New Delhi knows what is good for Nepal. Nepal and China relations are not that smooth also. Nepal is not keen on letting China establish a National Defence University in Kathmandu. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, Nepalese Army has a deep relation with Indian Army and they are not comfortable in developing this security proximity with China. Secondly, Nepal army feels that establishing this university is a matter of pride and Nepalese would establish the university themselves. Similarly, Nepal is reluctant to sign an Extradition Treaty, which China eagerly wants as they can use it to extradite Tibetans.

## TENETS OF INDIA'S DEVELOPMENTAL DIPLOMACY WITH NEPAL

In May 2018, when the Indian Prime Minister visited Nepal, he announced a new vision for Nepal–India relations. India announced that the future of the bilateral ties include India to develop agriculture, railways links and inland waterways in Nepal. The trinity is going to be the future guiding tenets of India's diplomacy with Nepal where connectivity will be playing a catalytic role to enhance people-to-people ties and economic growth. During the visit, both leaders of the two states jointly inaugurated an Integrated Check Post at Birgunj in Nepal. This will be an important milestone in facilitating people and cargo movement. They also carried out the ground-breaking ceremony for Motihari–Amlekhgunj petroleum pipeline. However, the Raxaul–Kathmandu electrified rail link is the real game changer. This rail link once established can provide a channel to travel from Rameswaram to Mansarovar. This will be a great push to the model of regional integration and India will be able to put up an alternative to the Belt and Road Initiative for the states.



### Can Civil Society act as a Bridge?

In 2015, Nepal witnessed a massive earthquake. India was the first immediate neighbour to extend assistance. However, many Indian NGOs played a role to assist the people of Nepal but faced bureaucratic hurdles. For instance, an Indian NGO that has raised resources in India cannot transfer money to a foreign state for NGO activity. This is in contrast to Chinese NGOs that operate globally. Considering that the core strength of India is not just its democracy but also its vibrant civil society; it is time that India establishes a framework on the role its civil society can play in diplomacy.



## UNDERSTANDING THE MADHESIS OF NEPAL, THEIR DISCORD AND STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE IN NEPAL

The Constitution of Nepal conceptualised in 2015 has not given representation to the Madhesis on the basis of population. In the Pahadi region, there is one representative for every 5000 people while in the Terai region, it is one representative for every one lakh people. In the new constitution, the Madhesis and Tharus (who constitute 70% of the population of Terai) were left out. Madhesis consist of Maithili, Bhojpuri, Awadhi, Hindi and Urdu speaking people. The people in the hills or Pahadis consist of Limbus, Khambus, Magurs, Gurungs, Tamangs, Khasas and Nepali Aryans. Nepal has

### Why Pahadis hate Madhesis?

The origin can be traced back to Treaty of Sagauli, where under the point 7 of the Memorandum of Approval, the Raja of Nepal would not inhabitants of Terai or Madhesi people. Since this provision, the Pahadis have a fear of dual loyalties of Madhesis and perceive them more Indian than Nepalese.

faced severe problems in accommodating people of South Terai. The Pahadis, in the new constitution, have reasserted their dominant role. The new constitution does not have equal representation of all groups in the Parliament. The total number of seats planned for the Parliament is 165. More than 50% of the Nepali population lives in the Terai region. The total seats allotted to people of Terai are just 65 in number. The Pahadi region has got 100 seats at a time when they had less than 50% of the population. India has requested Nepal to go for an inclusive constitution with equal representation. The Madhesis argue that by demarcating the Terai region differently, the Pahadis intend to destroy the roti-beti character. Under the roti-beti characteristic concept, women from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar if marry a Madhesi will be treated as a foreigner for up to five years from now. The Madhesis protests this and want Ek Madhesh, Ek Pradesh. As mentioned in 2007, there was an interim constitution that had, since then, been governing Nepal. In the interim constitution, as per Article 63(3), it was stated that geographical position and special characteristics would guide the electoral constitution. Article 63(3) also stated

that Madhesis would be given representation as per their population. In the new constitution, Article 84, which talks of representation, has dropped the point related to Madhesis. The interim constitution, under Article 21 had advocated that various Nepali groups would participate in state structure on the basis of the proportional inclusion principle, while under Article 42 of the new constitution, is dropped, something that which India is asserting be reinserted. Citizenship issues are also at the forefront. Many Madhesis have acquired citizenship by birth or naturalisation. As per the new constitution under Article 282, it mandates that the posts of President, Vice President and Prime Minister of Nepal and so forth, are to be reserved exclusively for those with citizenship by descent. India has been pitching for the addition of citizens who have acquired citizenship by birth and naturalisation also to be considered for higher posts. Over a period of time, some amendments were made by Nepal in Articles 42, 84 and 286 (dealing with the delimitation process). Some sections of Nepali groups, in the Terai region, who opposed the new constitution, in Southern Nepal for long undertook a blockade of Birgunj border in Raxaul. As a result of this, basic supplies could not reach Nepal. There was subsequently a severe shortage of commodities, including LPG cylinders in Pahadi region. The Nepali people have a perception that through the blockade (in which India categorically denies any role), India has imposed its own version of economic sanctions in Nepal. Even in case of the Terai region, due to the blockade, there was a strong anti-India sentiment. The major businessmen community in the Terai region consists of Marwaris. They have good relations with the people of the hills but are not very comfortable with the Madhesis. India annually supplies 1.3 million tonnes petroleum products to Nepal. Because of the blockade, Nepali people had to resort to cutting of trees to meet the fuel shortages, there was a massive deforestation and this led to a huge layer of smog in Kathmandu and other areas. Despite immense poverty, Nepali people now had to face health-related issues due to the smog.

## FORMATION OF MADHESH PRADESH PROVINCE IN 2021 AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

As per the Constitution of Nepal, each province in the federal structure was given the freedom to decide its name and its capital and the names were to be endorsed by at least two-thirds majority of their respective provincial assemblies. Accordingly, all the five provinces of Nepal, including Province 3, Province 4, Province 5, Province 6 and Province 7 were successfully given names in 2021. The decision made by the provincial assembly members of Province 2 to name the province as 'Madhesh Pradesh' has been applauded by the people of the province as the Madhesh Pradesh has given



an identity to the Madhesi people for the first time in Nepal's history. The naming of Province 2 as Madhesh Province is based on cultural identity and the naming has sent ripple effects in Nepalese political circles because other Nepalese provinces have been given the name either based on the name of the rivers or geographical locations. Since there are different ethnic groups or nationalities residing in Nepal, the naming of Madhesh Pradesh could compel people of other provinces to seek names based on ethnicity as well. However, the naming or formation of provinces on ethnic lines is not important because the real test of Nepal lies in creating an enabling environment in the federal structure where the different provinces get adequate autonomy at the financial and administrative levels. It is imperative for the political leaders of Nepal to consider this dimension seriously and contribute to strengthening federalism, democracy and republican system by granting due power to the provincial and local units.

## THE HISTORY OF KALI RIVER, KALAPANI ISSUE AND TREATY OF SAGAULI

After the Anglo-Nepal war ended in 1814, the British and Nepal signed the Treaty of Sagauli on 2nd December 1815 (the treaty was eventually ratified on 4th March 1816).<sup>\*</sup> Article V of the Treaty of Sagauli, as explained in the book says, "The Rajah of Nepal renounces for himself, his heirs and successors, all claims to or connection with countries lying west of the Kali River and engages never to have any concern with those countries or inhabitants thereof". The problem with the Treaty of Sagauli was that it never attached a map to demarcate authoritatively the alignment and source of the Kali River. The framers of the treaty (where W. J. Webb did the demarcation as the surveyor) were in no way aware of the geography of the region and based on their understanding on the fact that Hindus while going to Mansarovar consider Kalapani, which is located at the base of Lipulekh Pass, as a source of the River Kali. The British Surveyor W. J. Webb toured the entire Byans region. The people of Byans are called Byansis. This was the region where the Kali River was located. He surveyed the territories in the west and east of the river. He stated that Kali River is a part of Kumaon region traditionally. Kumaon region historically, prior to the coming of British, was a part of Nepal. In 1817, the Nepali people made a representation to the British and claimed areas that were east of the Kali River. The Nepali people claimed the areas called Tinkar, Chaggru, Nabhi and Kuthi. The Governor-General in Council accepted the demand of the Nepali people. The Byans area was subsequently divided and Tinkar and Chaggru villages were transferred to Nepal, while the British kept Nabhi and Kuthi. The same ruling of the Governor-General in Council British also settled the question that arose related to the origin of the Kali River. The Governor-General in Council stated that the drainage of Kalapani and Lipulekh will remain with the Empire and Kali River shall form the boundary between the two states. Few years later, the Himalayan Gazetteer mentions that Bam Shah, the Governor of Doti (a local ruler of Nepal region), stated that Nepal boundary should be extended up to Kuthi Valley because Kuthi-Yankti streams are the western branches of the headwaters of Kali River. He asserted that the springs that were flowing from Kalapani had some smaller springs and one of the branches is Kali. On 4th February 1817, the first British Resident to Nepal, Edward Gardner told the Nepal Durbar that lowland areas between Kali and Gorakhpur were ceded by Nepal to the British in 1815 but these areas were given back to Nepal in 1860. The British clarified this to Bam Shah and kept Limpiyadhura Pass and Kuthi valley as part of Empire. After 1860, it was decided that the Deputy Commissioner of Almora would travel to Lipulekh Pass each year and open up the trade through the pass. The decision arrived was that the northern boundary of Byans would be the line of water passing between India and Hundes which was located in the settlement of Trail in 1828 (and Batten in 1840). Later in 1905, Charles Sherring was the Deputy Commissioner of Almora. He visited the Lipulekh Pass and mentioned that he camped at Kalapani. He observed that Kalapani had half a dozen springs and also stated that Tinkar Pass formed the boundary of Nepal.

## INDIA'S CONTENTIONS OVER KALAPANI

Nepal has two tri-junctions with India. One is at Lipulekh Pass and Kalapani in the western sector and Jhinsang Chuli in the eastern sector. The origin of the Kalapani issue goes back to Treaty of Sagauli. As per the treaty, Kali River is designated as the western part of the boundary. In between the two streams of the Kali River lies Kalapani. Kalapani is located at the tri-junction of Nepal-China and India near the Lipulekh Pass. The issue arises as the segments to the west of Kalapani of Kali River are claimed by Nepal while India claims segments to the east of Kalapani of Kali River area,

<sup>\*</sup>The author has referred CU Aitcheson's "A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads Relating to India and Neighboring Countries" Volume II, published by the Superintendent Government Printing India, Calcutta in 1909.



thereby making a claim to entire Kalapani itself. In 1962, when India had a conflict with the Chinese, Nepal was under the rule of King Mahendra. He was of the opinion that India might resort to forcible occupation of Kalapani. This motivated him to handover Kalapani to India for security. Indian strategic community does not accept this Nepali version. The Indian strategic community asserts that aggressive Chinese tactics worried India in 1950s over Tibet. This motivated the Indian leadership to negotiate with King Mahendra and as per the negotiations, it was decided to build 18 military outposts in northern frontier of Nepal, including a military outpost at Kalapani. In 1969, the Nepali Prime Minister was Kirti Nidhi Bishit. He was advised by the monarchy to speak with the Indian Prime Minister and urge India to withdraw from the posts. The Nepali side sent a list to India that mentioned the posts India should withdraw from in the northern frontiers. Ironically Kalapani and the post at Lipulekh were not in the list because the Prime Minister of Nepal stated that the King of Nepal is concerned about India's security concerns with Chinese and as an act of generosity, the posts at Lipulekh and Kalapani may remain. India and China have also been carrying out trade through the Lipulekh area and the trade agreement does not include Nepal, making it furious. The main issue between the two is that Nepal asserts that Kali River originates in the higher Himalayas from Limpiyadhura. This point of origin allows Nepal to claim access to Limpiyadhura, Lipulekh and Kalapani triangular land. India, on the other hand, opposes the point of origin claimed by Nepal and asserts that the river originates further down. The Indian claim about the origin of the river reduces the territorial claims of Nepal. The issue that Indian and Nepali government should negotiate is the area that lies in the south of the Kali River, where Indian (and earlier the British) cartographers have taken the watershed principle and land revenue records of Gunji village into account. The issue of the origin of Kali River was taken up Nepal in 1997 for the first time. This happened after the two sides signed the Mahakali Treaty of 1996 that envisaged Pancheshwar Project. In 1981, India and Nepal had created Joint Technical Level Boundary Commission to resolve border issues and remained in practice till 2008. So, in 1997, when Nepal raised the Kali issue, it was taken up for discussion in the Joint Technical Level Boundary Commission. Since 2008, when the Joint Technical Level Boundary Commission was dissolved, these matters are now taken up at the Foreign Secretary Levels.

## **WRITTEN RECORDS ON KALAPANI, KALI AND LIPULEKH**

In 1954, India and China signed a trade agreement and mentioned that Lipulekh Pass is a pass that can be used for trade and pilgrimage to Mansarovar. In 1954, after signing the trade agreement, India established a police post in Kalapani in 1956. On 5th October 1961, China and Nepal also signed a Boundary Treaty called Boundary Treaty between the People's Republic of China and Kingdom of Nepal. They mentioned in Article 1 that the boundary between China and Nepal originates at a point where there is a watershed between Kali River and Tinkar Pass that meets the watershed that exists between the tributary of Mapchu River (also called the Karnali River) and Tinkar River. The beauty of this agreement is that it also shows the location of Kali River similar to the location as mentioned in Indian map of 1954. While the pillar number 1 at the boundary is placed at the Tinkar Pass, the Nepali diplomats assert that pillar number 0 could be at the tri-junction of India, Nepal and China (could be mean that in the 1961 agreement, it was left for demarcation in future). On 20th January 1963, China and Nepal signed a Boundary Protocol. In the Protocol, they created permanent border markers. These markers were numbered from 1 to 79 and the boundary marker 1 was located at Tinkar. The tri-junction, claimed by India (though not formally delineated) was based on the 1879 map of the British. But the subsequent maps of India show tri-junction 5-kilometre southeast of Lipulekh and Limpiyadhura Pass. In 1991, when Chinese Premier Li Peng visited India, the two sides concluded an Agreement on Resumption of Border Trade between India and China and this agreement clearly asserts that Lipulekh is a mutually agreed reading point. The Protocol of Entry and Exit Procedure for Border Trade between India and China of 1992 also mentions the same about Lipulekh. In 2005, India and China concluded the Agreement on Confidence Building on LAC. Article V of this agreement states that Lipulekh Pass in the middle sector of the LAC will be a route for trade.

## **SLEDGEHAMMER TACTICS, HYPERSENSITIVE SOVEREIGNTY AND MAP MACHINATIONS BY NEPAL**

In November 2019, India published a new political map, approved by its Parliament, it showed Kalapani, Lipulekh and Limpiyadhura as a part of Indian Territory. The new Indian map of 2019 is ironically the exact replica of the map the India has published in 1954 in Atlas of Northern Frontiers. This Atlas, till date, remains, India's official map for the frontier



regions. Nepal objected to the same by asserting that as per the Treaty of Sagauli, Kalapani, Lipulekh and Limpiyadhura belonged to Nepal and India should not resort to unilateral measures to hurt sentiments of Nepali citizens. The ties between India and Nepal further deteriorated after 8th May 2020 when India inaugurated the Dharchula–Lipulekh road. In 2009, it was decided to construct this road. Nepal did not object at that time. It is an 80-kilometre long road. This road will shorten the travel time for pilgrims travelling to Mansarovar. Nepal raised a protest that the road passes through their territory, a claim that has been rejected by India. Nepal, in return, in 2020, amended their Constitution (by bringing a second Amendment to Nepali Constitution that will change Schedule 3 of the Nepali Constitution) to publish a new political map and made claims to Lipulekh, Kalapani and Limpiyadhura as territories belonging to Nepal. In fact, after showing Lipulekh, Kalapani and Limpiyadhura as part of Nepal, they have also shown three villages, belonging to India, in Pithoragarh District of Uttarakhand—Gunji, Kuti and Nabhi—as belonging to Nepal (thereby adding 335 sq km area in Nepal). Gunji is a historic village, which is last village in India, located on Indian border and Tibetan people often come to Mandi in Gunji. The new map shown by Nepal is based on the maps of Nepali scholars such as Mangal Sidhi Manandar and Hriday Lal Koirala. They have shown the origin of Kali River at Limpiyadhura. These scholars of Nepal have asserted that the British deliberately manipulated the maps after 1850 and showed the Nepal boundary from Lipu Khola (the British showed Lipu Gad as the boundary in 1857 and Pankha Gad in 1879) which they assert is a sign of incompetence of the British and a sinister plot. This is in contrast to the maps of India, of 1954 and 2019 that have shown the origin of Kali River being not at Limpiyadhura but Lipulekh. Nepal, however, maintains the Kali River as Kuti–Yangti River itself. India rightly asserted that under Article V of the Treaty of Sagauli, Nepal had renounced all claims on the areas west of Kali River. India has asserted that the issue related to Kali and Kalapani has been discussed in detail during the Joint Working Groups established in 1997 and 1998; thus, the recent attempts of K. P. Oli to resort to artificial map making serves no purpose. Nepal is right to assert that they have asked for talks on boundary issue for a long time and India has behaved as “big brother” and often refused talks, thus compelling Nepal to take the drastic step of going for a constitutional amendment.

## INDIA'S 'NOTING' AND NOT 'REGRETTING' OR 'DEPLORED' POLICY STANCE

Ironically, after the constitutional Amendment was passed, Mr. Oli stated that he is ready to talk with India and sort out the issue. This is not a right time to talk to Nepal because the dialogue should have happened prior to the amendment. If India talks now, Mr. Oli will try to position himself in a situation of strength and will present India with political fait accompli. The resolution of the problem has become more intractable after the amendment. A dialogue is no doubt the only solution but can happen only in a conducive atmosphere. India has done right in “noting” the second constitutional Amendment and has not “regretted” or “deplored” the same.

## CHINESE AND TWO AND A HALF 'NEPAL FRONT' EXPERIMENT AGAINST INDIA

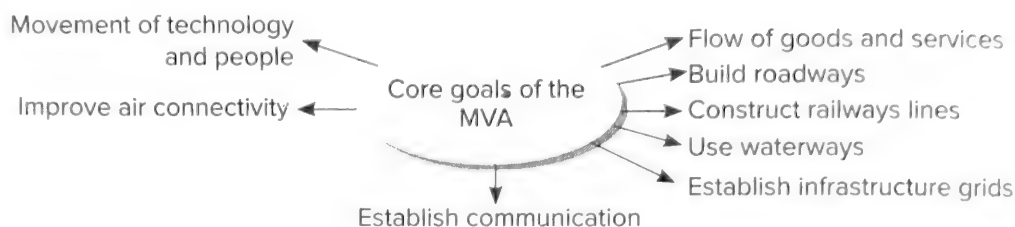
The present issue is a symptom of a deeper malaise that afflicts India and Nepal ties where the Nepali Communist party has a deep rooted suspicion of India and wishes to enlarge its space by breaking free from what it perceives to be a claustrophobic embrace of India. It is this that has compelled Nepal to adopt a policy of balance, which manifests as the China card. It is very clear that the way K. P. Oli government has responded to Kalapani issue, Citizenship amendment issues, that they enjoy the backing of China. In fact, it is now clear to Indian strategic community that the Chinese have tried experiment opening of Nepal as a front against India at a time when they are themselves in a standoff with India in Ladakh. The Communist Party of China and Communist K. P. Oli sync well with each other and Oli seems to have used the deep pockets filled by the Chinese to offset any influence of India. The determination with which Oli has transformed a relationship based on *roti–beti ka rishta* clearly proves that his alignment to Chinese have given him the needed backing. In fact, it is also clear that the Chinese backing to Oli has come at an opportune time when Oli is witnessing massive backlash in his domestic political constituency, including his abject failure in tackling COVID-19 in Nepal and failure to fulfil the aspirations of the Nepali people. While the Indian government has steadfastly tried to build a relation with Nepal on Hinduness (which had the potential of opening up a civilisational and cultural alliance), but Oli seems to have preferred to use the boundary issue to politically save himself for his domestic failures, while distancing himself from India. While Oli may go for a tighter embrace of China, the Chinese smartly have occupied 33 hectares of Nepali land. The Survey



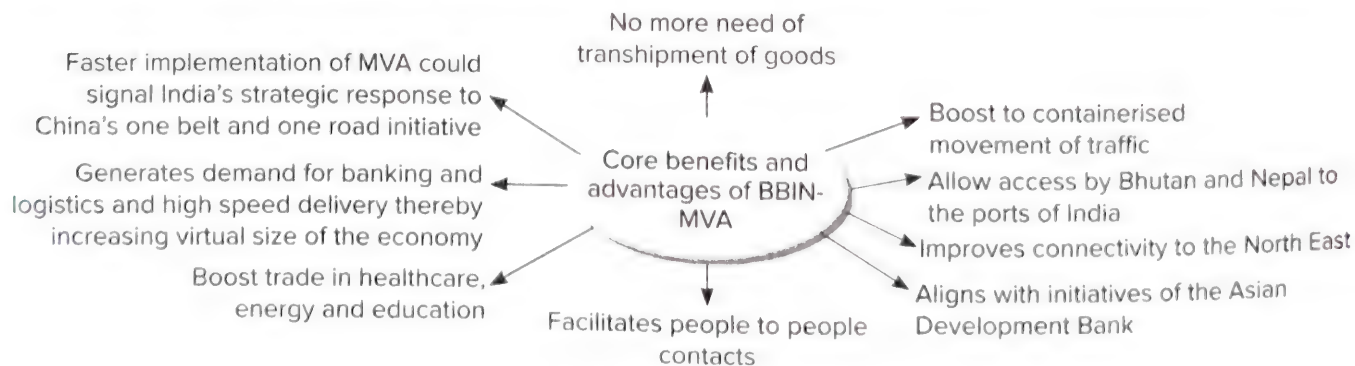
Department of Nepali Agriculture Ministry published a report in 2020 which asserts that 10 places out of 11 have been encroached upon by the Chinese. The fact that Nepal has stated, "they were forced to act when India unilaterally created Lipulekh Dharchula road" is clearly in sync with the Chinese objection of "India unilaterally altering LAC by creating DSDBO road". The Chinese have carefully played with Nepal as a front and have succeeded in putting pressure on India at a time when they already choking India in Ladakh. India needs to prepare for a two-front war (China and Pakistan) and multi-front diplomatic stress in the future (Nepal today, which could bring Sri Lanka and Bangladesh in future as well).

## BANGLADESH, BHUTAN, INDIA AND NEPAL MOTOR VEHICLES AGREEMENT AND CONNECTIVITY DIPLOMACY

In June 2015, the four SAARC nations, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN) concluded a sub-regional MVA for regulation of passenger personnel and cargo vehicular traffic. The MVA will not only facilitate economic development and integration of the region but also, will simultaneously facilitate seamless movement of goods and people amongst the four signatory states. The governments will boost regional connectivity.



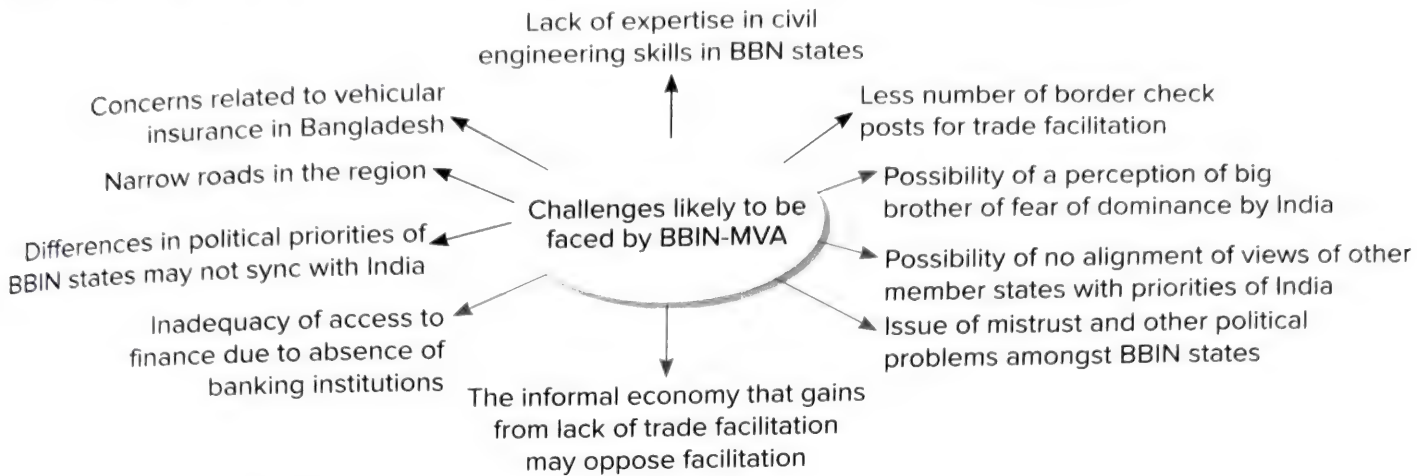
One of the major aims of the BBIN member states is to enhance connectivity and ensure seamless passenger traffic up to Thailand. The BBIN states are contemplating an MVA with Myanmar and Thailand as well. This would allow BBIN access to the ASEAN states. In the 2014 SAARC Summit in Kathmandu, there was a proposal to establish an MVA amongst all SAARC states. Because of reservations by Pakistan, the idea was dropped and a sub-regional MVA was envisaged which finally got concluded in 2015 in Thimpu. By 2016, all the states ratified the agreement, thereby paving way for seamless connectivity in South Asia. India and Bangladesh at the bilateral level have taken a number of steps to improve connectivity. In June 2016, the two concluded a Trans-shipment Operation Agreement, enabling India the access to Ashuganj port of Bangladesh to be used for transporting goods to Tripura and other North Eastern States. There is an ongoing Kolkata-Dhaka-Agartala and Dhaka-Shillong-Guwahati Bus service already operational. One of the biggest achievements of the MVA would be that it would enable the establishment of regional South Asian supply chains, especially in textiles, yarn and readymade garments. Thus, it may not be wrong to say that the agreement indeed is a force multiplier that may boost economic integration in the region. The BBIN clearly is a positive step forward in India's neighbourhood first policy.



Bhutan had been a little hesitant with the MVA as it feared that an increase in the vehicular traffic in Bhutan due to the MVA from other states could lead to adverse environmental impacts on Bhutan. But studies have proven that regional MVA boosts not only economic integration but tourism as well. However, the truck and taxi operators of Bhutan have been quite critical of the MVA as they feel that the Bhutanese road infrastructure may not be able to sustain incoming vehicular traffic. The National Council of Bhutan, in November 2016, rejected the MVA. India, since then, has hopes that the Royal



Bhutanese government will take steps to ensure that all internal issues would be sorted out soon and the agreement would be operationalised. The issue raised by Bhutan has emerged as a key challenge to the implementation of the BBIN-MVA.



## VARANASI TO BENGALURU SPECTRUM AND FUTURE OF INDIA AND NEPAL RELATIONS

Varanasi has been a keystone city for India and Nepal. From the Nepali doyen of democracy B. P. Koirala to Pushpalal Shreshta, the founder of Nepali Communist Party, both have been residents of Varanasi. Up to 1990s, the easiest way to reach Kathmandu was from Varanasi. However, with the onset of globalisation, the Varanasi–Kathmandu route witnessed a downturn and Bangalore–Kathmandu has now become the most profitable sector with Nepali programmers coming to Bangalore for creating software India supplies to the world. This reflects the changing dynamic of India and Nepal relations today. Even though the globalisation has influenced Nepal, its politicians, academia, bureaucracy remains ingrained with an anti-India sentiment as a plank of nationalism. This is why India feels that Nepal is incorrigible while Nepali attitude is a reflection of its angst as a small state against a civilisational giant. While globalisation may have improved the penetration of technology in Nepal, and given its people a cosmopolitan outlook, but this cosmopolitanism is without metropolitanism. Even though Nepal may try to diversify globally, its roots with India remain strong. This is why it is imperative for India to re-write its story for Nepal by focusing on what the Nepali youth wants, be it good infrastructure or even more shopping malls. Only by creating economic plusses can India and Nepal happen to keep their people-to-people ties stronger. The natural corollary of this would also be a much needed image makeover for the two. Because of cultural and ethnic commonalities in India and Nepal, it befuddles when anything goes awry between the two. While Varanasi may remain a key stone of the past, it is imperative to look at Bangalore as a contemporary reality.

### I Wish to Change My Neighbours

Several Nepalese politicians have often stated in private communication that if Nepal had Maharashtra or some south Indian states as its neighbour, then Nepal would have witnessed prosperity. It is time for India to position Uttar Pradesh and Bihar as economic dynamos so that economic prosperity flows across the borders.

## THE ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP WE CAN GROW TOGETHER

The future of India and Nepal relationship is based on the paradigm of how Nepal will leverage India's economic dynamism for its own benefit? An assessment of the tenets in the chapter previously clearly argue that till now Nepal has followed the policy of arbitrage and differential custom duties, both of which have benefitted only a limited section of traders and politicians. Nepal has to firstly understand that the relationship with India has to move beyond the current 'politics only' and should draw up specific policies to enhance economic cooperation so that the political spheres and economic sphere are kept separate. This even requires India to develop a vision on how it sees Nepal, beyond just civilisational neighbour.



## **FUTURE AREAS WHERE INDIA CAN HELP IN CREATING A 'SAMRIDDHA NEPAL, SUKHI NEPAL'**

India can assist Nepal in certain areas as given below.

<b>S. No.</b>	<b>Areas where India can help in creating a 'Samriddha Nepal, Sukhi Nepal'</b>
1.	Investments in high-quality educational, medical and sports institutions
2.	Assist Nepal to globally sell medicinal plants such as ashwagandha and shatavari in post-COVID world
3.	Assist Nepal to position itself as a global leader of Ilam tea and coffee, two high-value products they grow
4.	Set up training centres in Nepal that train their youth for jobs of caregivers in Israel and Gulf, thus leveraging the demographic dividend of Nepal





CHAPTER

# India's Relationship with Sri Lanka

## HISTORICAL RELATIONS BETWEEN INDIA AND SRI LANKA

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The relations between India and Sri Lanka go back to the times of the advent of Buddhism. Buddhism as a movement spread over Sri Lanka some 2000 years ago. The earliest mention of Sri Lanka dates back to the time of the *Ramayana*. Ravana, the king of Lanka, who held Sita captive, was rescued by Ram with the help of Hanuman, who was in a way India's first diplomat, and who built the Adams Bridge (without L&T) to help Ram reach Lanka. The north and northeast region of Lanka has been economically integrated to India. The native people of Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) were colonially under the British, but were not a part of British India Empire, being administered separately. From the 1830s onwards, British acquired indentured labour from India, especially from Tamil Nadu, and took them to Ceylon. The Tamils who were transported by the British settled in the northern part of Ceylon. The northern region was relatively dry and lacked resource. The British used a well-planned policy of sending out missionaries to the northern part where the Tamils were residing. The Tamils were a mixture of Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus and Christians. They took advantage of the missionary education provided by the British. They sent their children in Ceylon to schools and later on these children contributed to the education system started by the British. India became independent in 1947 while Ceylon in 1948. In 1948, India advocated the idea of a federation based on a mutual defence agreement with India; Ceylon became extremely suspicious of India. India, time and again, did try to convey to Ceylon that it had no expansionist agenda and acknowledged its respect for Ceylon's independence and sovereignty. Ceylon was renamed as Sri Lanka in 1972, and later, in 1978, was officially named the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. As an autonomous federation, based on mutual defence alignment with the British, Sri Lanka signed a Defence Treaty with Britain and the British continued using Ceylon for naval and air activity.

## THE TAMIL REFUGEE PROBLEM BETWEEN INDIA AND SRI LANKA

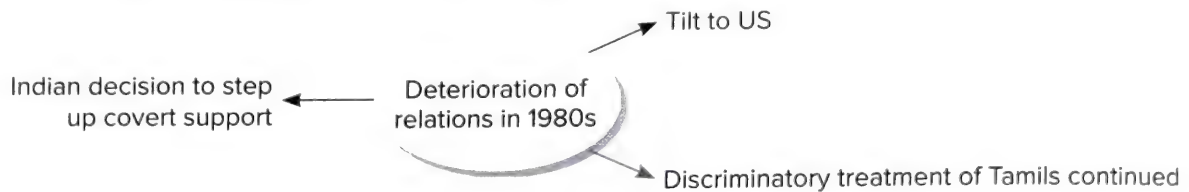
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As previously mentioned, the British took Indian Tamils to Ceylon to work as plantation workers. After Ceylon became independent, the Sri Lankan government, called Sinhalese government, discriminated against Tamils against local natives called Sinhalese, thereby deepening the void in Indo-Ceylon relations. During Jawaharlal Nehru, no attempt was made to bring any Tamils back as, for generations, these Tamils had lived in Ceylon and were more citizens of that state than of India. Ceylon, on the other hand, devised a mechanism to make it tough for Tamils to acquire state citizenship. They also wanted to ensure they put an end to Tamil dominance in public services. Because of the British missionary work, the children of the Tamils grew up to hold positions in Ceylon's administrative departments. Post-independence, through the Sinhalese language barrier (by making Sinhalese language mandatory), they made it tough for Tamil administrators. However, in 1964, there was a Lal Bahadur Shastri-Sirimavo Bandaranaike pact that was signed whereby Ceylon agreed to give three lakh Indian Tamils in Ceylon citizenship and India also agreed to repatriate a sizeable number to India. In 1975, Sirimavo Bandaranaike had imposed emergency in Sri Lanka while in 1977 Indira Gandhi did this in India.





Jayewardene J. R., who succeeded Sirimavo Bandaranaike, did not promote Indo-Sri Lanka relations despite his coming to India for a state visit after being elected. Jayewardene continued to marginalise Tamils and Tamil subjugation continued unabated in Sri Lanka. Jayewardene tilted the foreign policy of Sri Lanka towards the US.



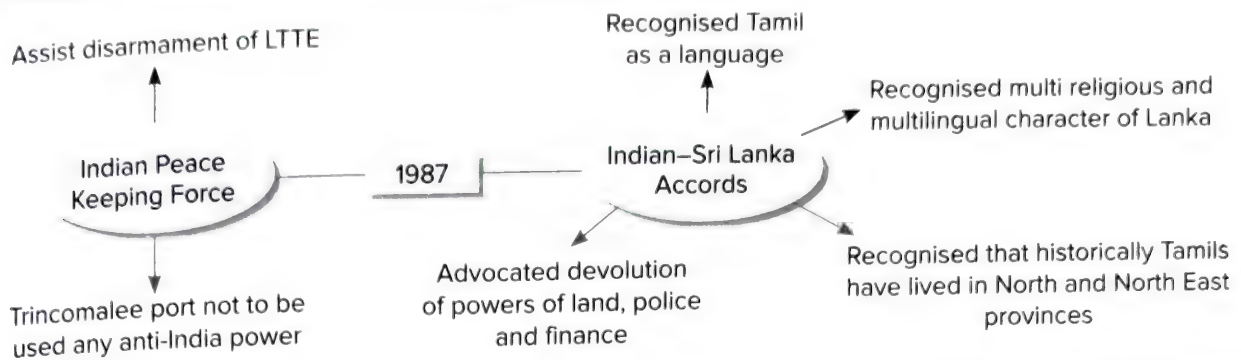
## THE LIBERATION OF TAMIL TIGERS EELAM ISSUE

During the 1971 Indo-Pak war, Indian allegiance shifted towards the USSR as Sri Lanka gradually drifted towards the US. Jayewardene advanced a liberal and open economy and positioned Sri Lanka westward. Jayewardene not only allowed deeper presence of the US firms in Lanka but also granted refueling permit for the nuclear powered US aircraft carrier Kitty Hawk during India-Pakistan War of 1971. The situation especially deteriorated in 1977 and 1981 due to Tamil riots. The ruling party of Tamil Nadu, the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIDMK) was an ally of the Congress Party at the centre, and Indira Gandhi, in 1981, warned Jayewardene that India would not tolerate the persecution meted out to Tamils and advocated him to be cautious. Post-1980, India adopted a very delicate policy. It wanted to take a revenge for the harsh treatment meted out to Tamils in Sri Lanka and also the Sri Lankan support to the US in 1971 when India was fighting a war. India used the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) to train Tamil rebels in Sri Lanka. The aim was to use Tamil rebels to destabilise the Jayewardene regime. While arming the Tamils, RAW had to ensure that the Tamil rebels do not succeed in creating a separate state. The RAW supported Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation. It was in 1976 that V. Prabhakaran formed the Liberation of Tamil Tigers Eelam (LTTE), a separatist and insurgent militant force, under the guidance of RAW. The RAW also supported TELO and LTTE and both began to seek support from Tamil political leaders in Tamil Nadu. As the RAW had gradually succeeded in destabilising the Sri Lankan government, it slowly stopped supporting the rebels as its objectives were achieved. But by this time, the LTTE had emerged as a powerful force and began to assert itself as the sole representative of Tamils in Sri Lanka. When Indira Gandhi died, Jayewardene took the help of Pakistan and the US to get Sri Lankan forces trained to counter the LTTE rebels. This move on the part of Sri Lanka was not well received by India. In 1987, Sri Lanka launched an operation against LTTE in the northern area of the state where Tamils lived. They imposed a blockade in the area. This led to massive humanitarian crisis because the Sri Lankan government imposed a blockade where Tamils were living in Jaffna region. The Indian Air Force airdropped food and other essentials to Tamils in the northern region. India warned Sri Lanka that if the blockade were not removed, India would militarily attack Sri Lanka. This warning had the desired effect and Sri Lanka advocated the need to resolve the matter through dialogue.

## INDIA-SRI LANKA ACCORD 1987

After a dialogue of the two states, India-Sri Lanka Accord (ISLA) had been signed on 29 July 1987. As per ISLA, the LTTE was to give up their weapons to the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) and Sri Lanka was to accommodate the Tamils and go for devolution. The Accord assigned a certain amount of autonomy to Tamil areas with Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) controlling the regional council and called for the Tamil militant groups, including LTTE, to lay down their arms.

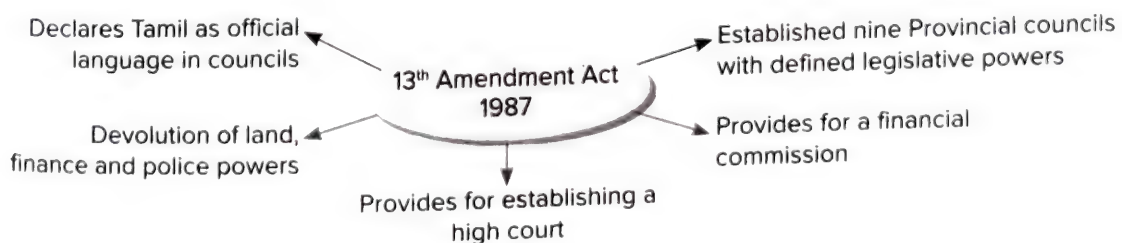




As the ISLA was executed, a large number of LTTE cadres avoided surrendering weapons to the IPKF and consumed cyanide. Many even began to fight the IPKF. The violence unleashed post the ISLA in Sri Lanka created renewed tensions in the minds of Sinhalese who began to perceive India's role as an undue interference in Sinhalese internal affairs that was not in Sri Lanka's best interests. The Indian government increased the IPKF numbers from 6,000 to one lakh and justified the raise by citing national security reasons. The ISLA was an attempt to conclude the ethnic war of Sri Lanka through constitutional and political means. The basic idea of Rajiv Gandhi while concluding the Accord was that the ISLA would provide India an opportunity to shape the post-war political trajectory of Sri Lanka. The ISLA had two goals. Firstly, the idea was to persuade the conflicting ethnic groups to join mainstream politics and secondly, seek political devolution in Sri Lanka by altering the constitution of the state to get autonomy for the Tamil community. The ISLA was rejected by the LTTE and it resorted to violence against both India and Sri Lanka and violence continued till 2009, when LTTE was finally crushed.

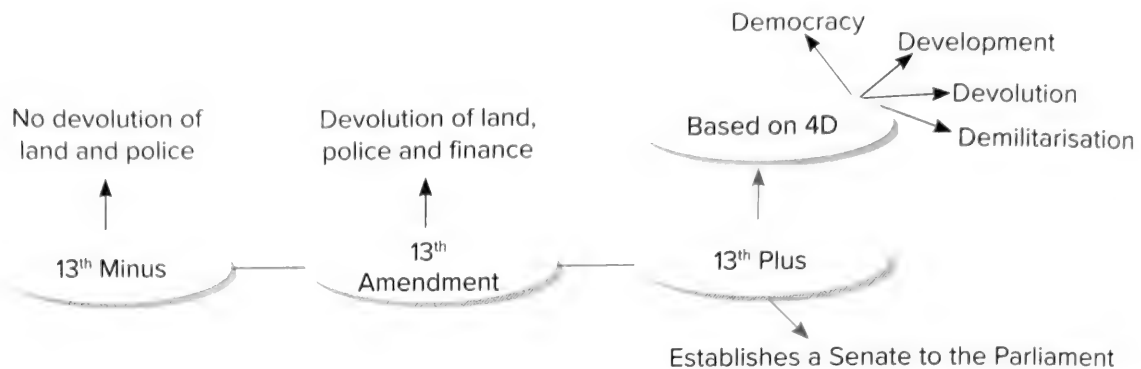
### 13th AMENDMENT ISSUE—13th PLUS AMENDMENT AND 13th MINUS AMENDMENT

In 1987, the Sri Lankan government, through the 13th Amendment, resorted to the devolution of power by creating provincial councils. In 1987, the Sri Lankan Parliament also passed the 13th Amendment Act to the 1978 Sri Lankan Constitution. The Provincial Councils Act No. 42 of 1987 established provincial councils. On September 2 and 8, 1988, President Jayewardene issued proclamations enabling the Northern and Eastern provinces to be one administrative unit administered by one elected Council. In 1988, elections were organised in North East Provincial Councils (NEPC) and A. V. Perumal of EPRLF won the elections, becoming the first Chief Minister of the North Eastern Provincial Council. India, under Rajiv Gandhi, linked the IPKF's withdrawal to the implementation of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution of Sri Lanka that granted councils in Tamil regions. In November 1989, in the Indian elections, V. P. Singh won and in March 1990, it ended the IPKF mission and delinked the IPKF's withdrawal from the 13th Amendment. The IPKF was recalled to India and the entire idea of NEPC devolution collapsed. In May 1991, the LTTE assassinated Rajiv Gandhi (or RAW!) and then was subsequently designated as a terrorist organisation. After the death of Rajiv Gandhi, many Tamil groups also began to stop supporting the LTTE. As India realised the failure of its mission, it also felt the need to go for a fresh look at India's Sri Lanka policy. After the defeat of the LTTE in 2009, Sri Lanka has announced the execution of the 13th Plus Amendment Act where the idea is to devolve more powers to its provinces. The members of Provincial Councils have consistently complained about their dependence on the central government of Sri Lanka for finances, with no powers to the highly restricted Provincial Councils to raise finances.





In 2013, a Parliament select committee met to discuss devolution but this time, land rights and police powers were not devolved. Even today, the 13th Amendment has not been implemented with full force.



The basic issue is the reluctance of Sri Lanka to devolve policing powers fearing that active insurgent sleeper cells need centralised control. Though the councils have been created, but an analysis of the present state of the councils proves that they have become an extension of the ruling political party in power at the Centre. Corruption and patronage politics has slid the councils into complete decay and institutional paralysis. India has always followed the logic of national unity being the foundation of internal and external security. It is a key driver behind India's Sri Lanka policy. It has always felt that if there were a revival of separatist demands in Sri Lanka, it would have a spillover effect in India. Ironically, way back in 1963, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) had advocated for the secession of Tamil Nadu, but did not take up the issue after 1963. India has always followed the policy that positive nation building can always lead to greater nation unity and this may happen only if inclusive policies are followed. Sri Lanka, however, since its inception, has been driven by Sinhalese majority policy, which was instrumental in creating alienation in the minds of the Tamils residing in Sri Lanka. For India, an imbalance in state building could consequently have external fallout and could disturb the strategic-economic balance of India. Hence, India had advocated the inclusion of Tamils in the nation building process of Sri Lanka since ISLA, as the psychological unity with Sri Lanka could have proven to be beneficial for the long-term national security of India itself.

## ROLE OF INDIAN POLITICAL PARTIES IN INDIA AND SRI LANKA RELATIONS

Any discussion of India–Sri Lanka relations obviously needs a mention of role of political parties of Tamil Nadu. We also need to understand, however, that while the influence of the DMK and the AIDMK has been detected in India's attitude to the Tamil Eelam question, their instigation was not the sole deciding factor of our policy. The main reason of influence in the past has been the presence of Tamil Nadu-based parties as part of the coalition at the centre. When Rajiv Gandhi had gone to Sri Lanka to sign the ISLA in 1987, he had even taken DMK and AIDMK into confidence despite such concurrence not being mandated constitutionally. After Rajiv Gandhi's assassination in 1991, when the Congress government came back to power, the AIDMK supported Congress and in 1992, when it moved to ban the LTTE, the AIDMK was not only supportive of the demand but actively helped the process. In UPA-1 (2004–2009) government, the DMK was a supporter of the Congress Party and advocated a hands-off approach. In 2006, India accepted the DMK's Sri Lanka policy as what the Government of India's Sri Lanka policy should be in case of the Eelam war-IV. When in 2008, the LTTE were almost about to be crushed, the DMK began to threaten quitting the alliance if the Indian government took no steps to stop the Eelam war-IV but ultimately refrained from anything beyond rhetoric. Post-the Rajiv Gandhi assassination, none of the Tamil parties ever took a pro-LTTE stand ever again.

## INDIAN CITIZENSHIP AMENDMENT ACT, 2019 AND ISSUE OF TAMILS REPATRIATION

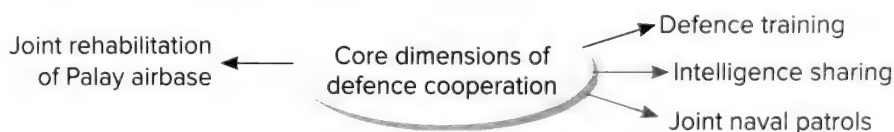
In 2020, there was a controversy that had erupted regarding the Indian Citizenship Amendment Act. It was stated that the Act did not allow Tamils to be granted the Citizenship of India. India has always stated that it will not allow the Tamil refugees in India because it follows the principle of non-refoulement and voluntary repatriation. In India, the government



allows the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to screen the refugees' incoming and ascertain the voluntary nature of repatriations. The UNHCR undertakes counselling of refugees and helps them obtain documents and provide reintegration grants and support. Also, with respect to Sri Lanka, it is important to understand that even the Indian government does not want Tamils to come to India because Sri Lanka follows the principle of proportional representation and if Tamils come to India, their numerical strength to seek political integration in Tamil-dominated areas of Sri Lanka will decrease. This is the reason why India has not included them in Citizenship Amendment Act as India favours voluntary repatriation of Tamils. Today, even India does not want too much pressure on Sri Lanka from the Western countries on Tamil question, as that will only push Sri Lanka to gravitate towards China. Thus, bilateral reconciliation and repatriation are good as a solution.

## INDIA AND SRI LANKA DEFENCE DIPLOMACY

The defence relations between the two have not evolved deeply and are mired since 1990s. However, in recent times, cooperation has begun in the areas of maritime security and joint training. India has been training Sri Lankan officials at the Defence University of India and is constantly undertaking intelligence sharing. In fact, intelligence sharing has been a key area of cooperation since the Eelam War-IV. Indian Navy has regularly shared naval intelligence with the Lankan navy and the Coast guards of the two nations regularly cooperate. However, India does not supply any major arms to Lanka and has limited this defence cooperation to the use of defensive and non-lethal equipment and tactics.



## INDIA AND SRI LANKA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

The economic relations between the two countries have opened up only since the end of the Cold War. Sri Lanka was, as a matter of fact, the first South Asian economy to go for liberalisation way back in 1978. By the end of the Cold War, trade began to increase with India as India liberalised its economy. Sri Lanka also perceives India as a potential for FDI supplier. There has been, moreover, a steady flow of tourists from India. The trade has gradually shifted in favour of India, as Sri Lankan exports to India are lesser than their imports. Both have tried to rectify trade practices through a Free Trade Agreement (FTA). India and Sri Lanka signed the FTA in 1998, which finally became operational in 2001. The India–Sri Lanka FTA gives duty-free preferential access to each other's goods in a time-bound manner. India exports petro products, pharmaceuticals, two wheelers and vegetables while importing rubber products, spices and electric wires. Indian firms operational in Sri Lanka include Tata, Jet Airways, Ashok Leyland, CEAT, Apollo, and so forth. In 2003, a joint working group was established for a comprehensive economic partnership agreement (CEPA). This was done to enhance the FTA and envisage the promotion of cooperation in the service sector. India is also undertaking development of the Trincomalee port, as this will boost its strategic presence vis-à-vis Sri Lanka. Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) has invested six million tonne per annum Grandfield refinery be established in Sri Lanka through direct investment. At present, Sri Lanka has only one 2.5 million tonne refinery.

## INDIA AND SRI LANKA ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION AGREEMENT

India envisages services-based cooperation in CEPA. However, Sri Lanka has had expressed some reservations, it hopes for more economic and technical cooperation rather than increased movement of Indian professionals in Sri Lanka as expressed in the CEPA. Sri Lanka favours an Economic and Technical Cooperation Agreement (ETCA) over the CEPA. In the CEPA, India had decided to open up 80 sectors for Sri Lanka and advised that Sri Lanka open up IT and marine ship building sectors. As the proposed CEPA would liberalise investment and trade in services, goods and facilitate movement of people, Sri Lanka feared that Indian firms may ultimately come to dominate the Sri Lankan economic space and might eventually lead to loss of jobs for the Sri Lankan native population. The movement of people's clause is highly resented by



Sri Lanka. In 2020, India had signed the ETCA for cooperation in services, investment and technology dimensions. The ETCA would provide Indian states in south India access to Sri Lankan markets. The ETCA has made Sri Lanka the new geo-economic pole of South Asia. Under the ETCA, India would focus on development of Trincomalee as a hydrocarbon hub for the region of Bay of Bengal.

## INDIA AND SRI LANKA KACHCHATHEEVU ISLAND ISSUE

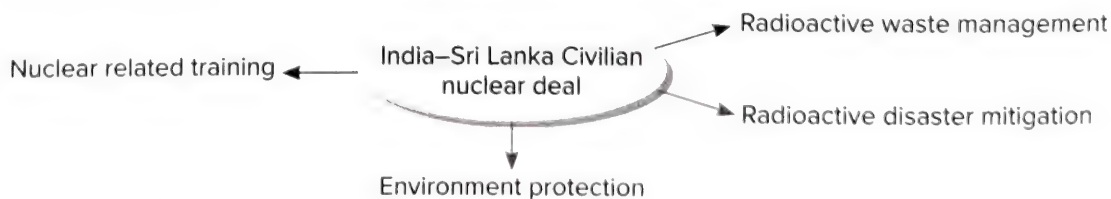
Kachchatheevu is a small island located about 10 miles northeast of Rameshwaram. The fishermen used it to dry their nets and catch fish. It has been a part of Raja of Ramnand's territory who was controlling it as the lead Zamindar. When the Zamindari system was abolished, Kachchatheevu became a part of the Presidency of Madras. When India became independent and initiated a boundary negotiation at the maritime level with Sri Lanka, Kachchatheevu was a disputed territory between Ceylon and the British and there was never an agreement on boundary ever. In 1947 and 1976, as per agreements, the issue was bilaterally resolved between India and Sri Lanka, and the resultant maritime agreement has allowed Indians to visit Kachchatheevu for pilgrimage for which no visa is required. The Indian government has maintained that the right of access to Kachchatheevu does not cover any fishing rights. In 2008, the AIDMK filed a petition in the Supreme Court (SC) asking that the SC declare the 1974 and 1976 agreements as unconstitutional. The Indian government produced the facts in the highest court and clarified the issue of Kachchatheevu, stating that the island has not been ceded. Consequently, the court disposed of the AIDMK's petition.

## INDIA AND SRI LANKA MARITIME ISSUES

After the independence of both nations, fishing has become an important economic activity. Because of a large common area between the two in the sea, the two have often had issues of fishermen straying into each other's waters. In the last few decades, fish and aquatic life in the Indian continental shelf has depleted. As a result, more fishermen enter Sri Lankan waters and also resort to the use of modern fishing trolleys which Lankan fishermen are unable to match. The Indian fishermen saw a golden business opportunity during the LTTE era as the Sri Lankan government had disallowed the easy movement of Sri Lankan fishermen in waters owing to military operations. However, with the LTTE war over, since 2010, there is a resurgence of Sri Lankan fishermen in Palk Bay. They were trying to reclaim their legitimate lost base and, in the process, became engaged in conflict. In order to solve the issue, understanding the importance of ocean economy becomes significant. The Department of Ocean Development and Ministry of Agriculture have to ensure assistance to the states so that fishermen are able to find alternative livelihood to fishing in Palk Bay. The Indian government has renewed the thrust on ocean economy in recent times with the Prime Minister signing an Agreement on Ocean Economy with Sri Lanka, Mauritius and Maldives in 2015. There is an immediate need to sign a protocol for joint patrolling. In 2017, the two had agreed to adopt a humanitarian approach to the fishermen's issue and expanded defence cooperation in trilateral format with Maldives.

## INDIA AND SRI LANKA NUCLEAR COOPERATION

The two concluded Agreement on Civilian Nuclear Cooperation in 2017 when Indian Prime Minister visited Sri Lanka.



## CHINA FACTOR IN INDIA AND SRI LANKA RELATIONS

In the recent times, China and Sri Lanka have deepened their ties. Sri Lanka is a part of Belt and Road Initiative. China has taken Hambantota port on lease for 99 years by erasing 1 billion dollar debt of Sri Lanka (which RAW says will be



used by Chinese warships and submarines to refuel during war in Indian Ocean) while it has refurbished Colombo port to make it a transshipment hub and has created the Lotus Tower infrastructure project. This is despite the fact that India and Sri Lanka have no such major infrastructure project in the history. To counter this rising port diplomacy of China, India has adopted a two-point strategy. Firstly, it has decided to undertake direct strategic investments in Sri Lanka. Secondly, it has adopted the two plus one developmental model, where India and Japan have come together to offer infrastructure support as a challenge to the BRI. India has aided the development of Kankesanthurai port, Palay and Rajapakse International airport, Trincomalee oil storage facility and Jaffna-Colombo railway. India and Japan have also come together to work on East Container Terminal building at Colombo. The relationship of Colombo and Beijing is purely economic and some have asserted that China has magnified the debt to Sri Lanka to the extent that Sri Lanka has fallen into a debt trap. This is where India gains and India's former High Commissioner Taranjit Singh Sandhu rightly stated that *India's aid to Sri Lanka is not to raid or invade because our focus is co-prosperity of our neighbour*. Despite the growing China-Sri Lanka ties, Sri Lanka has often stated that while Beijing is a good friend of the Lankan people; India is a relative of Lankan people. In the future, it is imperative for India to understand that Sri Lanka is geopolitically located at the heart of Indo-Pacific, so China will have engagement with them. Rather, India should sit down with Sri Lanka and identify the red lines where Chinese projects can be a threat to the national security of India. At the political level, it is imperative for India to identify the orange zones of cooperation.

## THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CRISIS IN SRI LANKA AND INDIA'S POSITION: AN IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS

Majority of the countries in South Asia are witnessing economic and political upheavals. While Myanmar is witnessing crisis on refugee front, the Pakistanis are witnessing political and economic turmoil and Sri Lanka has had mass protests on streets and political altering. Sri Lankans are facing the most devastating economic crisis since their modern existence in 1948. The Sri Lankan civil war, analysed in preceding sections, had already caused a drain on the resources of the country for 26 years before coming to an end in 2009. What followed after 2009 was a series of economic mismanagements by successive governments that caused budgetary shortfalls and deficits in balance of payments. From 2010, the GDP of the country too fell drastically from 8.01% to (-) 3.56% in 2020. Because of aggressively falling GDP before the pandemic, the government had resorted to a massive tax cut in the economy to fulfil its electoral promises and between 2020 and 2022, this caused a shortfall of one million taxpayers at a time when economy was plummeting. The economic theory argues that any reduction in tax rates increases the disposable incomes in the hands of the people and increases the money circulation in the economy. However, this did not occur in the case of Sri Lanka because the people already paid a severe price owing to increased healthcare expenditures in the pandemic phase. As the resource mobilisation weakened and budgetary deficits widened, in the period from 2020 to 2022, the government resorted to massive inflow of external debt to manage the economy. As the external debt kept accumulating, the Central Bank of Sri Lanka kept printing more money and with almost negligible ways to put the money for productive economic use, the surplus money in the system ended up in spilling over inflation and worsened the exchange rates. Because of absolute mismanagement of economic situation, the government failed to bolster revenues, generate employment and boost public welfare; thus, plunging the state into an economic abyss. Because of shortages of essential medicines, food and fuel, the public distrust began to rise when government defaulted on 51 billion USD foreign debt. With International Monetary Fund insisting on a conditionality-centric bailout and Chinese, the traditional supporters of Sri Lanka in the post-2009 recovery period pumping half-baked financial assistance, the angst in the public rose to the extent that its first victim became the ruling political class. In this backdrop, the Indian government has adopted a Sri Lanka policy based on the Neighbourhood First Doctrine. While commenting on the political changes, India has maintained that what is happening inside Sri Lanka is an internal issue and India stands with the people of Sri Lanka, thus strengthening the people's dimension in its conduct of foreign policy. India has extended all possible help to the Sri Lankans, ranging from monetary to humanitarian aid, and striving to seek support of as many other donors as possible to ensure that Sri Lanka receives a multi-vector support. It is in India's interest to see a stable and prosperous Sri Lanka because any upheaval in Sri Lanka, economically and politically, will only end up in bringing more foreign powers in India's strategic lake and impinge on India's strategic autonomy. This thinking of India explains why India has taken a lead in providing support to Sri Lanka to help the state tide over the tough times.





# 9

## CHAPTER

# India's Relationship with China

### LOCATING INDIA IN THE CHANGING NATURE OF CHINESE DIPLOMACY

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The seventh century Buddhist monk, Xuanzang, described that India and China have a relationship based on soulful intimacy (aatmiata), closeness (nikatata) and solidarity (bhaichara). Today, the Sino-Indian relations are a mixture of cooperation, competition and rivalry.

When India became independent, three broad events influenced the formation of India's China policy. In 1949, there was a revolution in China and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was formed, establishing the People's Republic of China (PRC). The newly established PRC accepted the Leninist–Stalinist style of state administration. If we trace the history of China, we understand one thing that they do not believe in tracing their existence to a system based on sovereign equality but they trace their origin on the divine and boundless reach with Central authority of divine Chinese emperor, with focus on establishing tianxia (which in Mandarin means “all under heaven”), that is a Middle Kingdom guided by heaven. In 2012, when Xi Jinping acquired power, he gave the goal of “qiang zhounggou meng”, which meant a dream of a strong nation to be at the centre of the earth, which he intends to achieve by 2049 (which Xi envisages as a “community of shared future of mankind”).

Early 1950s was a period of decolonisation. Because new countries were born in the region, the question that emerged was what role India and China would play in this newly emerging postcolonial world order. India propounded its NAM (non-aligned movement) for the decolonised world and used NAM to position itself as a third force in the era of bipolarity. However, India realised that success or failure of its position in a new international order would depend upon the support or opposition to its efforts by China. Jawaharlal Nehru wanted to win the support of China and Nehru believed that an East led by India and China could guide the world morally at a time when the Western thought process was being guided by polarised ideological underpinnings. Thus, Nehru's idea of China was based on cooperation than containment. This is the reason why Nehru even invited Zhou Enlai to the Bandung Conference. Nehru wanted to build India's relationship with Chinese on the enduring historical connections of the two as civilisational states. *(It is important to note that we may emphasis that India and China have civilisational links, but, a study by Prabodh Chandra Bagchi rightly points out that the cultural relations between India and China have been a one-way traffic primarily with no attempts ever made to discover the influence of China on the life and thought of India. Also, the cross-Himalayan links have primarily concentrated around Tibet. Tibet has been one region that remained non-existent in the thoughts of Han Chinese historically. This means that the soul of China has been majorly untouched by the civilisation of India.)*

### THE 24 CHARACTER STRATEGY OF CHINA AND ITS GLOBAL OUTLOOK

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The Chinese tactic was called “united front”. Under this tactic, the Chinese aimed to avoid their isolation by building solidarity with the non-aligned world and dividing the West. The Chinese played a consummate game of isolating the main threat by building unity with all other forces against the West. The Chinese diplomats kept the Chinese state steady in a churning sea that was full of storms. Whenever the storm tide rose in the sea, these diplomatic fishermen aptly gathered



the fish and expanded the global presence of the Chinese and gained rightful international acceptability. Whenever the ship ebbed, these diplomatic fishermen of China ensured that the Chinese ship (the state) remained firmly moored. Vallabhbhai Patel, in contrast, had been a keen advocate of a more cautious approach and he advocated for a military build-up for India and creation of roads near the China border, along with other vital infrastructure. He even favoured the US cooperation to balance China if needed, but Nehru was not in favour of any US cooperation to contain China as he found it to be a Cold War tactic, which could weaken non-alignment. But the death of Patel in 1950 gave Nehru the steering wheel of India's China policy and Nehru could not be challenged by anyone thereafter. Throughout the Cold War, the Chinese played their cards well and ensured that they do not upset either Henry Kissinger or Alexei Kosygin. In 1972, when Chinese decided to open up their economy, Zhou persuaded Nixon to abandon Taiwan (which he did in 1978), a staggering act of diplomacy, considering, Chinese had not even exercised a single day of sovereignty over Taiwan. The high noon for Chinese diplomacy was the period of 1980s and 1990s. The American people became fascinated with the Chinese when the Protestant Missionaries in the 1990s began to assert that god wanted to bring salvation to the Chinese. In the 1980s, when Deng Xiaoping took over China, he decided to supplement the strategy of diplomacy adopted by Zhou till date with his own "24-Character Strategy". The basic premise of Deng Xiaoping was to observe calmly, secure the position of China, hide the capacities of China and bide time, maintain a low profile deliberately and do not claim leadership. These thoughts eventually became the Chinese diplomatic paradigms and the Chinese diplomats measured their words, maintained their dignity, projected their power but never blustered. The Chinese diplomats became masters of their briefs and were ingrained by Zhou that core advantage in any negotiation is to know more than the other side knows. This is why, a classical tactic of Chinese diplomats is that they flatter their acquaintances till today by calling them "old friends" and they deliberately built stronger relationships with interlocutors of less friendly states than friendly ones while behind the doors, they would skilfully put the blame of failure on their opponent. So seductive was the Chinese diplomacy that the Americans ironically lifted their sanctions within four weeks after the Tiananmen incident of 1989. After the death of Deng Xiaoping in 1997, arrogance began to replace the humility hallmark of Chinese diplomacy. The new diplomats, trained in English language and born with a careerist mindset quickly dropped persuasion and replaced it with a stick when a country took an action contrasting the Chinese wishes. The Chinese diplomacy in South China Sea asserts that the dominant diplomatic tactic of China is to pursue unilateralism and not compromise. Now the new tactic of China is to seek a revenge for the 'Century of Humiliation from 1839 to 1949' where China has developed an uncaring attitude towards the rest of the world as if the world has done nothing for China till today and rather, has shared a similar historical experience of humiliation only. In the international community, if a statement of fact or some reasoned opinion is presented to Chinese today, they perceive that as an insult or a humiliation, clearly reflecting that the veneer of humility has thinned down. This is a clear indication of depleting goodwill and the ship being adrift at the sea. If the Chinese do not take corrective measures in a post-COVID-19 world, then the ship could be soon dragged from the shore by a receding tide. The Chinese may do well to recall what Kissinger told the White House staff in July 1971 after his trip to China, something that they seem to have forgotten today: "The Chinese style is impressive. The Russians will fight you for every nickel and dime, and elbow you at every level, and lose a million dollars of goodwill in the process. The Chinese have a sense of the longer trends and focus on that, not on ploymanship."

## CLOUDS SIGNIFYING THE RISE OF A NEW COLD WAR

All American Presidents, from Nixon, who gave international recognition to Chinese in 1978, to George H. W. Bush who washed the Chinese sins of Tiananmen Square in 1989, to Bill Clinton who ushered the Chinese entry in WTO (World Trade Organization), have been 'responsible stakeholders' in the rise of China. In contrast, the Chinese have always behaved as hard-nosed people who pursued engagements with the US on a selfish note, although couched in high principles always. They have always disguised their real purpose of thwarting the American hegemony by speaking the words that Americans always wanted to hear; from anti-Soviet rhetoric that was music to the American ears in the Cold War to that of market economy in the age of post-ideology. This was because the Chinese since Mao to Xi Jinping have always feared that Americans by deception wish to change communist regimes and keep their capitalist order intact and this view was reinforced to the Chinese when the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991. This strengthened the resolve of the Chinese to create a parallel universe of their own to resist the capitalistic America and since then Chinese have been building an alternative trading system (the Belt and Road Initiative), an alternative banking system (the New Development Bank), their own



GPS (Beidou), digital payment platforms (like Alipay and WeChat Pay) to that of cutting edge digital network of 5G, all under the nose of the Americans, despite voices of caution from eminent political scientists like John Mearsheimer, who rightly stated that Hu Jintao's 'peaceful rise' would not be 'peaceful'. While American diplomats like Steve Bannon may say that the US is already at a war with Chinese, others like Richard Hass and Robert Zoellick might warn that starting a new cold war with the Chinese could be a grave mistake. The recent literature emerging from China like an essay called "The Chinese Reassessment of Interdependence" by Julian Gewirtz asserts that if Trump is determined to disentangle China from the global supply chains, then, Xi Jinping too is determined to break the US chokehold on technology. As the de-coupling is inevitable now, India will suffer the collateral damages. In the post-COVID world, Hong Kong will emerge as a new game changer between the US and China because the rivalry, which till now was purely material between the two, is shifting now to the ideological realm, where the US has condemned the Chinese assaults on human freedoms. The reason being that Hong Kong remains the bastion of capitalism of the West in the East, because many in the US had looked at Hong Kong as a statue of liberty, holding a torch of freedom and democracy, for those who enter China, thus it is an assault on American beliefs. As the time will progress and world will see more information suppressed and errors of omission by China related to COVID-19, there would be more questions raised on the future model of China in contrast to democracy. This divergence could become the seed of a new Cold War of the 21st century.

## THE WEI QUI AND BORDER ISSUE

While Indians may have invented chess, the Chinese version of chess is Wei Qui. Henry Kissinger gave an apt explanation of Wei Qui when he said, *If chess is about decisive battle, wei qui is about a protracted campaign and 'strategic encirclement' where opponents seek to occupy empty spaces and then surround and capture opposing pieces. While chess encourages single-mindedness, wei-qui generates guile and strategic flexibility.*

Let us try to understand the border problem by analysing the historical past. To explain the complex border issue, we have divided the study of the border into four phases.

## INDIA AND CHINA BOUNDARY ISSUE DURING THE BRITISH TIMES

Firstly, let us understand some historical aspects about the Tibetan people, Nepal, Assam and Kashmir and then we will link the four collectively.

Let us start our study with Tibet. China was under the rule of Ming dynasty till 1644. The Ming Dynasty controlled the entire mainland of China but never defined their rule over Tibet. It is believed by the historians that Tibet was independent at the time of Ming Dynasty. In 1644, Qing dynasty came to power in China. During the rule of Qing dynasty also, the Tibetans preferred to stay in isolation and as they had different beliefs from Han Chinese. The spiritual head of Tibetans is called Dalai Lama and he is also called as the political head of Tibetan people. Tibetans have never owed any allegiance to rulers of China unlike rulers of Korea and Vietnam historically. In 1717, Dzungar tribesman came from Mongolia and invaded Tibet via Aksai Chin. This invasion was perceived by the rulers of Qing Dynasty as a potential threat to China in future. So, the rulers of the Qing Dynasty in China responded to this invasion by sending a military governor to Lhasa called as Ambans in 1728. The Chinese instructed the Tibetans to respect Ambans (the military governor) in Lhasa. But Qing Dynasty rulers neither annexed Tibet nor did it alter Tibetan independence. Qing Dynasty encouraged the Tibetan people to respect the Ambans through a priest patron relation where Tibet was the priest and Qing Dynasty sent Ambans were the patrons. In 1792 Qing Dynasty and Tibet rule got transformed as Qing Dynasty issued a 29-point decree to Ambans that gave Chinese Ambans powers equivalent to Dalai Lama. The Tibetan people who began to fear the motives of China behind the 29-point decree resented this. We will come back to Tibet after some time. Let us turn our attention to Nepal now.

In 1769, British had established presence in India. Nepal at that time was under Hindu rulers who were called Newars. In 1769, there was a conflict in Nepal between Newars and Gurkhas. The Gurkhas were inhabitants of the hilly areas of Nepal. The British supported Newars (Hindus) against Gurkhas but, in the conflict of 1769, the Gurkhas defeated Newars and established a Hindu Gorkha Kingdom in Nepal. This upset the British for two reasons because firstly, they thought that the Gurkhas could undermine the authority of the British in India and secondly, since 1775 Gurkhas were attacking Sikkimese people, which affected the British trade with Tibet through Sikkim. To prevent any potential Gorkha aggression,

Anglo-Nepal war began, between the British and Gurkhas in 1814. British won the war by defeating the Gurkhas in 1816. The British concluded Treaty of Sagauli at the end of the war in 1816 and gained access to Tibet via Kumaon and Garhwal regions, which at that time were a part of Nepal. In 1817, after British defeated Gurkhas again and signed Treaty of Titalia with Sikkim in 1817. As per the treaty Sikkim enjoyed British protection by becoming a British protectorate (which enabled the British to deploy a company of troops) and Sikkim became a safer trade route to Lhasa. The Treaty also gave British a platform in Sikkim to watch Gurkhas in future. The Treaty of Titalia was replaced in 1861 and the new treaty gave British larger say in domestic and internal affairs of Sikkim.

Let us look at Assam region now.

Assam was under Ahom Kingdom rule. The Ahom rulers established power in Assam in 1212 AD. The Ahom kingdom began to become weak by 1820s. Burma saw a weak Ahom rule as an opportunity to expand to Assam. The British decided to check Burma and as a result in 1824 Anglo-Burma war took place. Burma got defeated in Anglo-Burma war in 1824. In 1826, Burma and British concluded a peace treaty in Yandabo, known as the Treaty of Yandabo. As per the treaty British got Assam under their control and Burma threat was nullified. Assam now gave British an easy access to trade with Tibet via Lohit Valley region of Assam. The British in Assam saw a bright spot in oil and tea plantations and this led the British to undertake massive investments in Assam.

When British began to undertake tea plantations, the local Assam tribes opposed British. They were not in favour of their areas to be exploited for commercial gains. The tribal groups of Assam also resented the British to use Lohit valley for commercial trade with Tibet. To tackle the obstructionist behaviour of tribals of Assam, the British decided to create inner line and outer line permits system with tribals. The rationale behind this system was to ensure that the British continue with their investments and trade without disturbing the tribals. The British succeeded in establishing the system with tribal rulers where they would do commercial acts in inner line areas while the outer line areas would remain with the tribals and British would not enter in those areas. Geographically, the region adjoining Assam was called Tawang (modern-day Arunachal Pradesh) and it was a part of Tibet or South Tibet. The region of Arunachal or Tawang was under the control of Monpas of Tawang (non-Tibetans). The Monpas of the Tawang were ethnically different people from Tibetan people but the region was a part of Tibet.

Let us look at Kashmir now.

## THE JOHNSON LINE BETWEEN INDIA AND CHINA

Kashmir was a part of Punjab when Maharaja Ranjit Singh ruled Punjab. Maharaja Gulab Singh Jamwal was the founder of the Dogra dynasty of Jammu and he was under the suzerainty of Punjab. Ladakh was an independent region. Gulab Singh had sent his armies in 1830s to acquire Ladakh and he succeeded. From Ladakh, Gulab Singh tried to make attack Tibet but was unsuccessful. Thus, in 1840, the rulers of Tibet and Gulab Singh signed a treaty and decided to respect "old, established frontiers". This means that they decided to maintain a status quo and left the boundary unspecified. Ranjit Singh died in 1839. After his death, there were two camps that strived for power in Punjab. The first were Punjabi Sindhanwallias and the second were Hindu Dogras. While the Punjabi Sindhanwallias were the natives of Punjab, the Hindu Dogras belonged to Jammu region (and lived in Punjab). The Dogras, living in Punjab, succeeded in supporting Sher Singh, the eldest son of Ranjit Singh to power. As a result, the Punjabi Sindhanwallias took refuge in the British territory. Sher Singh was unable to control his empire and eventually, in 1845–46 there was an Anglo-Sikh war. The British defeated the Sikhs in the war and annexed Punjab. After the war, the British concluded Treaty of Lahore with the Sikhs and asked the Sikhs to pay 15 million rupees as war indemnity. The Sikhs could not pay the amount. The British decided that if Sikhs are unable to pay the amount, then they have to cede Ladakh and Kashmir (under the control of Gulab Singh, who lived under suzerainty of Punjab), or the area between Indus and Sutlej. Thus, the British got Ladakh and Kashmir as per the Treaty of Lahore. To formalise the Treaty of Lahore, the British signed Treaty of Amritsar in 1846. The Treaty of Amritsar was signed between the British and Gulab Singh of Jammu. Under the treaty, Gulab Singh purchased Kashmir and Ladakh region from the British by paying 7.5 million Nanakshai rupees (the currency of the Sikh empire) and became the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir. The Dogra rule in Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh eventually began after the Treaty of Amritsar. Under the Treaty of Amritsar, the British told Gulab Singh two things. Firstly, they said that British transferred the region east of Indus and Eastern boundary hills to Gulab Singh but told him that the British will carry out survey and



then define to Gulab Singh the purpose of this transfer. This line means that the British told Gulab Singh that he would only administer the territories that he is receiving from the British but the boundary of the territory he administers ends in the East (near China at Pangong lake), which for the time is being undefined and the British will carry out a survey to define the boundary sometime in future. The reason why the British maintained an ambiguous boundary in the east (near China at Pangong Lake) was because it never wanted to upset China. China always maintained that there was no need for a boundary in the east because since ancient times, the Karakorum Mountains acted as a natural border. So under the Treaty of Lahore, Gulab Singh was to manage Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh and would not alter boundaries on his own until the British did a survey to define the border. Gulab Singh was instructed to maintain a balance of power and status quo on territorial boundaries.

## THE JOHN ARDAGH LINE AND MCCARTNEY-MCDONALD LINE BETWEEN INDIA AND CHINA

On the East of the Kashmir, there was a boundary with China. The boundary was undefined. This boundary of Kashmir with China was with a territory called Kashgar.

In 1864, the local ruler of Kashgar was Yakub Baig and he was a good friend of Gulab Singh. Beg decided to rebel against the Qing Dynasty of China and sought help from Gulab Singh. During Yakub Baig's rebellion, Gulab Singh sent his forces and helped Yakub Baig against China. After he rebelled successfully, Yakub Baig established an independent kingdom of Kashgaria. In return for his help, Baig allowed Gulab Singh to select an area of his choice in his kingdom and establish for himself a private retreat. Gulab Singh built a fort in Aksai Chin region of Kashgaria. To protect his fort, he even deployed a small army at the fort permanently. Now under treaty of Amritsar, British had told Gulab Singh that they would carry out a survey to the East to establish a boundary. So in 1865, the British sent William Johnson to carry out a survey. Johnson carried out a survey of the East region as mandated under Treaty of Amritsar. Johnson published a map and in that map, he showed the areas from Shahidullah, Aksai Chin to Kunlun as part of Kashmir, and eventually under the British India. The Johnson line map was published in 1868 and when it was published, the world got to know about this area of Aksai Chin for the first time. Johnson showed Aksai Chin region as a part of Kashmir because he found the retreat or fort (and some troops) of Gulab Singh in Aksai Chin. So, Johnson concluded that Aksai Chin area belongs to Kashmir. In 1868 when the Johnson line was published, the then Surveyor General of British India, Colonel Walker rejected the fact that Aksai Chin belongs to Gulab Singh as depicted by Johnson because most of the Chinese maps at that time had shown Aksai Chin as part of China. One thing to be noted is that it is the same Johnson line, which is used by India since 1947 to claim Aksai Chin as a part of India till today. In 1877, the Chinese army of Qing Dynasty captured Kashgaria and defeated Yakub Beg and renamed Kashgaria as Xinjiang. In 1856, there were Crimean wars. Russia, after the Crimean wars, had begun to industrialise. The Russian Czars also expanded power to Central Asia. The British feared Russian expansionism and they perceived that the Russians might advance from Central Asia to North Kashmir and eventually acquire India through the North. To check Russian advances, the British decided to keep a watch in Kashmir. In Kashmir, there were two important regions called Hunza valley and Gilgit region. Both these regions were in the North of Kashmir. So in 1892, the British established the military post in Gilgit and acquired control of Hunza and Nagar regions. This led to some confrontation with the Chinese because China had been making claims over Hunza. The ruler of Hunza too was tilted towards China and the British were concerned about this because they wanted the Hunza well under their control to check Russian advancements. In 1893, Huang Te Chen, a Chinese military official in St. Petersburg published the Huang Te Chen line and this line showed Aksai Chin as a part of Kashmir. In 1896, the British instructed John Ardagh, the Chief of Military Intelligence, to demarcate a border. John Ardagh proposed a line called Ardagh line based on a 'forward school' thought. This means that Ardagh wanted the boundary to be as far as possible in Kashmir so that the boundary can act as a defence against the Russian advances. This line was nothing but a strategic adoption of Johnson line of 1865. The line proposed a boundary in the crust of Kunlun ranges and incorporated Karakash and Yarkand river area as part of Kashmir. To check Russian advancement, the British wanted a permanent solution on the border. They decided to bury Johnson line and John Ardagh line and decided to propose a new solution. The British minister in Peking sir Claude McDonald proposed to British minister in Kashgar Charles McCartney in 1899 to finally solve the Kashmir China boundary. The British wanted that China renounce their claim over Hunza. As most of the Chinese map showed Aksai Chin as part of China, the British decided to do a trade-off. In 1899, McCartney-McDonald line was proposed. The proposal was that

China relinquishes its claim over Hunza and gets Aksai Chin in return. This line had the potential to resolve the issue. The proposal was sent to Peking but Peking remained silent on the same and did not respond to the McCartney–McDonald line. The British continued their control over Hunza and status of Aksai Chin, since Johnson line, remained unclear. In 1890, British and Chinese Qing Dynasty signed a trade treaty to do trade via Sikkim–Tibet border. The treaty did not include the Tibetans. The Tibetan became upset and decided to protest for their exclusion from the treaty. They destroyed the trade markers set up by the Britishers for passage in the area. The British and Chinese did not pay any importance to demand of the Tibetans. In 1893, the British and Chinese now signed a Convention to the 1890 Trade treaty and this convention gave the British the right to do trade via Chumbi valley. This again upset the Tibetan as Tibetan were again not involved in the Convention. The then Dalai Lama, Thubten Gyatso, now began to realise that Tibet will need third-party support as the British and Qing Dynasty are resorting to unilateral measures, that endanger the sovereignty of Tibet. Thubten Gyatso had an advisor named Agvan Dorzhiev. Dorzhiev was a Khorī–Buryar Mongol. He guided Gyatso to seek help of Russia. From 1898 to 1901, Thubten and his men regularly visited Russia and Dorzhiev acted as a mediator.

## THE SHIMLA CONVENTION AND CONSTRUCT OF MCMAHON LINE BETWEEN INDIA AND CHINA

In 1899, Lord Curzon became the next viceroy of British India and he replaced Lord Elgin. Curzon had intense hatred for Russians and became aware of Gyatso and his Russian support. Lord Curzon sent a mission to Lhasa. He wanted to inform through the mission to the Dalai Lama to respect the 1893 convention. A British named Younghusband led the mission. The mission of Younghusband reached Lhasa in 1904. The moment the mission reached Lhasa, Thubten and Dorzhiev fled Lhasa and Tibet came under the control of Ambans, who by now had become quite autonomous and powerful as parallel to Dalai Lama because the power Qing Dynasty in China was declining. Younghusband mission now directly dealt with the Ambans. A new treaty was concluded between British and Ambans on Tibet. As per the treaty, Tibet would no longer enter into third-party treaties including with Russians without the permission of British. The British would get access to all trading posts in the region of Tibet. A British agent will be stationed in South Tibet. As visible in the treaty, the British did not make Tibet a British protectorate nor fully established their presence in Tibet but allowed Ambans to continue a low-level administrative presence in Tibet. Thus, the 1904 Lhasa Convention ensured that the Tibet became a buffer between China and British India. Taking advantage of 1904 Lhasa Convention, the Chinese Qing Dynasty proposed that there be a new convention. In 1906, China proposed the new convention asserting that British also accept that neither the British nor the Qing Dynasty would interfere in Tibet nor will they annex Tibet. The British agreed to these demands and concluded the 1906 Convention. It is important to note that as per the 1906 Convention also, Qing Dynasty never attempted to annex Tibet and asserted its autonomous character. Anglo-Russian Convention now followed this in 1907 where Britain and Russia agreed not to negotiate with Tibet without the presence of Chinese. In 1909, Dalai Lama tried to come back to Tibet but as Ambans had already been taking care of Tibet, Dalai Lama fled to India in 1909. The British were prohibited to carry out any expeditions also in the outer line areas of Assam, as these areas were restricted for tribals. In 1911, a British officer Noel Williamson happened to cross the banks of river Dihang and entered into the area occupied by Abor tribe, which was in the outer line. This led to an aggression by the Abor tribe against Williamson and the Abor tribes massacred the entire team of Williamson. The British decided to retaliate to this. They crossed over into the Abor tribe region, massacred the tribals and reached up to Chinese boundary. They now asserted to the Chinese to establish a border in the East. What also motivated the British to design this Noel Williamson episode was the fall of Qing dynasty in 1911–12. As the Chinese were weak, due to the fall of Qing Dynasty, the British used the Noel Williamson episode to seek boundary solution. The collapse of Qing dynasty in China lead to a mutiny in Tibet and Tibetans revolted against the Ambans. This lead to collapse of the Ambans and Dalai Lama returned back to Lhasa in 1912. The British now got the right opportunity to keep Chinese and Russian route of Tibet and make Tibet a truly autonomous buffer state. The British played their cards. In 1912, the British minister in Peking short of a letter to Chinese administration. He asserted that China is interfering in Tibet and this is a violation of Lhasa convention 1906. He asserted that Chinese suzerainty is recognised by British over Tibet but that does not entitle the Chinese to interfere in Tibet. He asserted that China has violated Lhasa convention so they should now come for fresh negotiations. All this was just a game played by the British. Their ultimate aim was to take advantage of a weak Chinese Central government (due to fall of Qing Dynasty) and convince China to go for a fresh round of negotiations. The Chinese agreed to it and decided to go for talks. It is in this context that



on 23rd May 1913 the British invited China, Dalai Lama for a three-party talk. They decided to hold a conference on 13th October 1913 in Shimla under the leadership of British foreign Secretary Sir Arthur Henry McMahon as the chairman of the conference. In 1913, the Shimla conference began. McMahon represented the British in the conference; the Chinese by Ivan Chen and Tibetan representative was Lonchen Shatra. The moment the conference began, China protested that why is Tibet given an equal status. The British downplayed their protests. During the conference, McMahon unveiled the plan of British called the McMahon plan. As per the plan, British India would get Tawang region. The plan stated that Tibet would be divided into outer Tibet (depicted by a Red line) and inner Tibet (depicted by a Blue line). The outer Tibet would have a boundary with India and outer Tibet will have the authority of Dalai Lama. The Tibetan delegation led by Lonchen Shatra urged the British to keep Tibetan states in red line area as they were and also if Tso Karpo and Tsari Sarpa (two sacred Tibetan sites) be inside Tibet. McMahon agreed to it and as per the Shimla Convention, Tibet became an autonomous buffer. Ivan Chen, the Chinese representative, refused to accept the Shimla Convention and also the division of Tibet and eventually China did not sign the Shimla Convention. Thus, the British concluded the Shimla Convention in 1914 bilaterally with Lonchen Shatra of Tibet.



The British did not publish the Shimla Convention of 1914 till 1937. This was done to ensure that Russia did not become angry with the British. This was possible because in 1907 both Britain and Russia had agreed upon a treaty where they stated that neither would negotiate with Tibet without the presence of Chinese while in the Shimla Convention, British had bilaterally concluded the Convention in 1914 without China. The British finally published the Shimla Convention in 1937 and showed the McMahon line as the border. Chinese maintained Tawang cannot be a part of India as it was a part of South Tibet but the British however continued to assert that McMahon line would be the boundary in the East. Thus, during the British times, neither the boundary in the Western sector (Aksai Chin and Ladakh area) could be fixed and nor the boundary in East (Tawang) could be fixed and a border which was mutually acceptable to both British and China could never be demarcated and the fixing and re-fixing of the boundaries during British times was primarily done to suit their colonial interests. The British approach to the entire border issue was fluid and more driven by geopolitics than basic requirements of a nation state.

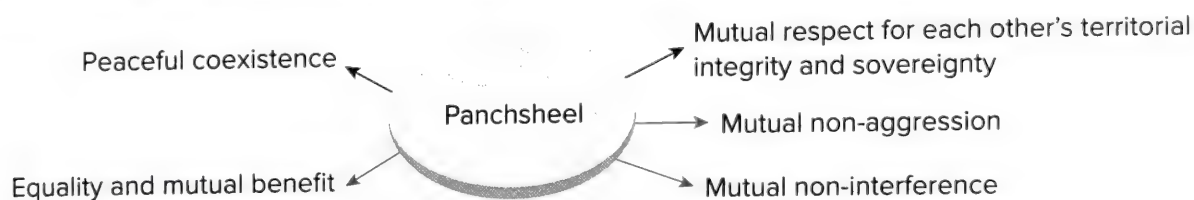
## THE ANNEXATION OF TIBET AND NORTHEASTERN FRONTIER AGENCY

After India became independent in 1947, there was a civil war in China at that time. The Chinese civil war ended in 1949 and the PRC was born. The PRC announced in 1950 that People's Liberation Army of China (PLA) should liberate Tibet. In 1950, PLA entered into Tibet through Aksai Chin. It is at this juncture, India wrote to China asserting that China should respect the autonomy of Tibet. China responded back by saying that Tibet is an internal issue of China and it will resolve it as per Chinese laws and it does not favour Indian interference in its internal affairs. In 1951, China entered into a 17-point Sino-Tibet Agreement. In the agreement, China stated that Tibet is one of the nationalities living in China since historical times and Tibet is an integral part of China. After the Sino-Tibet agreement, India accepted that it will not be able to deal with Tibet directly and will have to deal Tibet through China. In 1912, the British established Northeast Frontier Tracts

(NEFT) agency to administer Tawang. The NEFT officials negotiated with the leaders of tribes in Tawang and shifted the outer line further to the north but still Tawang remained a part of Tibet. Subsequently in 1914, the British signed the Shimla Convention and now Tibet was dissected as inner Tibet and outer Tibet. The outer Tibet was under the control of the Dalai Lama and China was to respect the autonomy of outer Tibet. However, the maps clearly did not demarcate Tibet and Tawang. Inner Tibet was the area in east and ended almost at the Bhutan, India, and Tibet tri-junction at Tawang. The British never labeled Tawang as a part of British India in the maps of Shimla Convention. In 1938, British Captain G. S. Lightfoot reached Tawang and informed the monastery leadership (Monpas) that Tawang is Indian Territory. The Tibetans and Monpas resented this and therefore British decided to restore Tawang to Tibet. In 1944, NEFT established control over Tawang during World War II but at the end of the war, Tawang was restored to the Tibet again. After India became independent, in 1947, Tibet wrote a letter to India to give back the lands under NEFT back to Tibet. India wrote back to Tibet saying that the areas are Indian Territory as per McMahon line and Tawang is a part of India. In 1954, The NEFT was renamed as NEFA or Northeast Frontier Agency.

## THE ROAD TO PANCHSHEEL AND DIFFERING PERCEPTIONS ON BORDER

In 1952, China informed India about its willingness to discuss 'all inherited rights and specific problems' including the issue of Tibet through negotiations. Nehru thought that whenever the dialogue will happen, India will not raise the issue of McMahon line as doing that may push China to seek fresh negotiations on the border and India is not keen on fresh negotiations as it considers McMahon line as the boundary. The talks between India and China happened in 1954 and India did not raise McMahon line issue in the discussion. There are reasons why India decided not to discuss McMahon line issue. Firstly, Nehru thought that since 1954, India has been administering the territories up to the McMahon line. China has not raised any objection till 1954. India perceived that as China invited India to discuss "specific problems related to inherited right", the McMahon line does not fit into the criteria of "specific problems" as China never raised any objection. Secondly, Nehru thought that if China had any problem with the McMahon line, they should have raised the issue. But as China did not raise the issue, it proved that China had accepted the de facto border in the East. In 1954, the two sides signed the Panchsheel agreement and one of the principles of Panchsheel was "mutual respect for each other's territory".



Thus, India thought that Panchsheel proves that India has a right to make McMahon line as a boundary in the East and China would respect Indian sovereignty on the border in the East. It is imperative to understand that why did China not raise the issue of McMahon line? Chinese always believed in deliberately not taking up the McMahon line border issue in 1954 with India because the Chinese were shrewd as they were constructing a road in Aksai Chin region to reach Tibet. They never wanted to raise the issue of any border with India as doing so would have exposed the Aksai Chin road to India and that could have complicated the Chinese plans in Tibet. In the Panchsheel, India however officially accepted that Tibet is a part of China.

## INDIA AND CHINA BOUNDARY ISSUE FROM PANCHSHEEL ONWARDS

After the Panchsheel agreement, the dream of Nehru to work with China at the global level to emerge as a global players and guiding light of the East began to take shape. Nehru was of the view that the success of Panchsheel meant that the border question was also settled. Little did Nehru know that his actions would lead to a crisis in future. There were a lot of factors that led to the situation of 1962.

In 1950, the Survey of India had created a boundary between India and China. The Eastern sector of the boundary was designated as McMahon line but was stated as "un-demarcated". The western and Central sector boundary was demarcated as "undefined" and a colour-wash was used. After Panchsheel in 1954, Nehru ordered the Survey of India to publish new



maps and show the boundary demarcated clearly. In the new maps, the words “un-demarcated” and “undefined” were dropped. The boundary in the East was now firmly established as per McMahon line. The colour-wash on the boundary in the Western and Central sector was also removed and a firm line was established. The boundary in the Western Sector in Kashmir was based on Johnson line and India showed Aksai Chin as a part of Indian Kashmir (as per Johnson line) and it is this that acted as the first seed for the conflict. Through these new map issued in 1954, Nehru indirectly conveyed that India’s territorial integrity is non-negotiable. Even when India published these maps, China did not respond. In 1954, China published their maps. In the Chinese maps, they showed Aksai Chin and NEFA region, including Tawang, as a part of China. Nehru took up this issue with China in 1954. China responded by saying that the Chinese maps are old maps and the PRC has not yet revised those maps and Chinese government needs time to revise those maps. This response by China came as a surprise to India. After India came out with new maps in 1954, Nehru asserted that India established check posts along the entire Frontier with China and the check posts would act as symbols of India’s territorial integrity. After China issued maps in 1954, China strongly protested the creation of Indian check posts. China asserted that Indians have transgressed deep inside Chinese territory. India responded by asserting that Indian posts were within the Indian Territory and not in China. China even complained that the boundary line in Middle or Central sector shown by India is not accurate as the boundary passes in Central sector through Himalayan passes and all these passes are located inside China. This issue emerged as the second point of friction. The border issue emerged in full proportion after 1957. In 1957, China officially announced the construction of Xinjiang–Tibet road that passed via Aksai Chin. India was shocked that China had secretly constructed a road in Aksai Chin, in an area that was claimed by India as per Johnson line of 1865. The 1957 Aksai Chin road was the third point of friction.

## NEHRU, KRISHNA MENON AND THEIR BETRAYAL TO THE NATION

After the People’s Liberation Army entered Lhasa, the Chinese made plans to improve communications and built new roads on a war-footing. The only way to consolidate and ‘unify’ the Middle Kingdom was to construct a large network of roads. One of these roads was the Tibet–Xinjiang Highway (today infamously known as the Aksai Chin road). The first surveys were done at the end of 1951–52 and construction began in 1953. The official report of the 1962 China War prepared by ministry of defence gave a few examples showing that the construction of the road cutting across Indian soil on the Aksai Chin plateau of Ladakh was known to the Indian ministries of defence and external affairs, and this long before it was made public. In early 1957, the Army selected an officer to go with a patrol and physically confirm the reports that China was building a road in the Aksai Chin area; the officer was Lt. Col R. S. Basera of 1 Kumaon Rifles. His mission was to be tough, exciting and most unique, as he had to proceed under cover to the vast plateau of Aksai Chin and confirm reports that the Chinese were constructing a motorable road from Kashgar to Lhasa. Disguised as a yak herder, Basera was accompanied by Havildar Diwan Singh from the Corps of Engineers. They were to move with three genuine Ladakhi yak herders. During a briefing at the Headquarters in Leh, Basera was told that it was crucial to maintain utmost secrecy about the mission. The Military Intelligence (MI) instructed them not to carry any documents that could disclose their identities and ordered them that no notes should be taken by them. They were asked to memorise the map and the route. They had to move in the easterly direction from Leh for about 250–300 km, till they reached the expected location of the new Chinese built road, in Aksai Chin. Initially, they would pass over difficult, undulating terrain, till they crossed the Karakoram Mountain Range and Shyok River. Their mission was of national importance, said their handlers in the MI. After a long and adventurous journey, they finally entered Aksai Chin. On the third day, one of the herders suddenly pulled Basera’s shoulder and showed him a dark line on the horizon; it was the road. The next morning, they walked in the direction of the road: The otherwise sluggish yaks too moved forward with renewed energy, matching the sudden spring in the step of their handlers. At noon, they were now near the raised road, they mentally noted every detail of the road that was not yet tarred. They immediately decided to return and inform the authorities of their discovery. They were asked to report in Delhi. At the end of the day one Lt. Col told them from MI, that their report would be sent to Defence Minister Krishna Menon, who would then discuss it with the Prime Minister. When the Defence Minister saw the report, he surprisingly supported the Chinese side, and even called it a friendly neighbour. He asked the MI director, if the area through which the road passed had been confirmed on a map. The DMI told him the patrol had not carried a map for security reasons. But that was not all, the Prime Minister Nehru and the Defence Minister, more or less rebuked the DMI for sending the patrol. The Prime Minister told the Defence Minister that no more such patrols were to be sent to

Aksai Chin till the matter had been thoroughly investigated, as such patrols could easily vitiate the good relations between friendly neighbours. When Lt. Col Basera was informed of the review of the report by the Prime Minister and Defence Minister, he felt utterly disgusted because the long and difficult patrol they had undertaken, now appeared to have been a futile, month-long exercise. After all, for Nehru, Aksai Chin was an area where not even a blade of grass could grow.

## BUILDING CLOUDS OF IMPENDING 1962 CONFLICT

In 1958, a Chinese magazine called *China Pictorial* printed a Chinese map on page 20 and 21. In the map, the NEFA (including Tawang) and Aksai Chin was shown by China as a part of Chinese territory. India protested strongly and asserted that China should not show Indian regions as a part of Chinese territory. The MEA of India sent a note to China asserting that China cannot show such a map as Zhou Enlai had asserted that the maps used by China are old maps and PRC has not revised them and a fresh survey was needed and only after that could the maps be changed. This was entirely a new approach by China and it had never said this point of a fresh survey earlier that it announced now. This came as a big blow to India as India had assumed since 1954 that Indian boundary was non-negotiable and the boundaries were fixed. Nehru took up the matter directly with China in 1958 to which China responded and clarified their position in January 1959. China expressed tremendous dissatisfaction in the way India unilaterally demarcated the borders. China reiterated that they had earlier informed India in 1954 that the Chinese maps are old and China needs time to revisit those old maps. China asserted that the Indians have unilaterally shown Aksai Chin as a part of India without consulting the Chinese. The Chinese asserted for the first time in 1959 in their response that they consider the McMahon line as an illegal line because the Chinese representative Ivan Chang never ratified the Shimla Convention and therefore, the Chinese had rejected the McMahon line. China asserted that the McMahon line is an imperialistic design of the British and as China did not accept the Shimla Convention, McMahon line cannot be considered legally acceptable by China. China indirectly conveyed that they could accept the McMahon line provided India displays 'accommodating attitude' on Aksai Chin (Chinese were looking for a land swap). The Chinese response was a big blow to India as India had assumed that McMahon line is the border. This response emerged as the fourth point of friction.

## TIBET, THE CIA AND SINO-INDIAN CONFLICT

In 1724, Chinese had sent the Ambans after tribal invasions. That was the time when China also incorporated two regions of Tibet named Amdo and Kham into western China and renamed the areas as Qinghai. In 1912, when Qing dynasty collapsed, Dalai Lama left India from Darjeeling and went back to Lhasa. The Tibetans crushed Ambans and Dalai Lama resumed control again and ruled Tibet till 1933. In 1935, Tenzin Gyatso became the new Dalai Lama and he continues till today. In 1951, China and Tibet signed a 17-point agreement. Under this agreement it was decided that the land, which is held privately by Tibetans, would be taken away by the state. This upset the Tibetans as the Tibetans had owned a lot of private estate in the region. The Socialist revolution in Tibet began from peripheral areas of Kham and Amdo. Thus China said that Kham (in Sichuan province after 1949) and Amdo (in Qinghai province after 1949) would be from where the Communist system began. Here the farmers would act on Communist lands. All barley and crops produced would be acquired by state and some would be redistributed as per communist principles. Unfortunately, the grains acquired by Chinese state left Tibetans with no grains and this upset the people of Amdo and Kham to this extent that in 1956 they began to form resistance groups to arm themselves to fight back China. The CIA of the US, using Indian Territory as a base, assisted these rebels covertly to wage a war against China. As the rebels fought Chinese government, there was a huge exodus of people from Amdo and Kham to Lhasa. The Chinese PLA continued to suppress these warring rebels. In 1956, Dalai Lama on his visit to India told Nehru about his desire to put up an asylum in India. This visit generated suspicion in China as China began to think that India and CIA are working together to destabilise Tibet. By 1958, the number of resistance fighters and rebels grew almost to one lakh. Dalai Lama sent delegates to convince these guerrillas to not fight. The guerrillas convinced the Dalai Lama delegates to join the resistance and eventually the delegates ended up joining the resistance. By 1959, a lot of religious leaders from Amdo and Kham began to go missing. The people of Tibet began to feel that the Chinese were killing their leaders secretly and wanted to target Dalai Lama. The suspicion of Tibetans increased on 10 March 1959 when Chinese invited Dalai Lama to watch a Chinese drama in military barracks without bodyguards. Tibetans thought that this was a Chinese trap to kill the Dalai Lama. On 10th March 1959, lakhs of



Tibetans formed a human cordon around the Dalai Lama summer Palace called Norbulingka to protect the Dalai Lama from possible abduction by China. The crowd kept on protesting and asked the PLA to leave Tibet while Chinese thought India and CIA are fueling these protesters. As tensions grew in Tibet, on 15 March 1959, the PLA fired shells into Norbulingka and this forced Dalai Lama to exit and the Dalai Lama began to secretly trek to India. As Dalai Lama left, Tibet was burnt down and PLA killed around 80,000 plus Tibetans. As, Dalai Lama reached India; the Indian government gave refuge to Dalai Lama. In February 1960, Nehru invited Zhou Enlai for talks. Zhou decided to come to India for seven days. On 19th April 1960, Zhou arrived in India. On his arrival, Zhou rightly asserted, "I have come here to seek a solution and not to repeat arguments". China stated that they are willing to demonstrate 'practical attitude' to McMahon line and can accept McMahon line as a boundary as they have done with Myanmar, but provided India displays a similar 'accommodative attitude' on Aksai Chin. India insisted that Western, Central and Eastern sectors cannot be put on an equal footing and the three sectors need to be negotiated separately. Also, India rejected a bilateral swap of Aksai Chin and McMahon line and insisted that McMahon line be the boundary in east while Aksai Chin be a part of India. Chinese rejected Nehru's offer and were alarmed to see India claim Aksai Chin, an area that never belonged to India. The Chinese began to think that India's claim to Aksai Chin is a deliberate attempt by India to undermine Chinese authority in Tibet. The talks reached a deadlock and no concrete proposal on a border solution ever emerged. After the talks failed, Zhou Enlai returned.

### **IF I GIVE THEM AKSAI CHIN, I SHALL NO LONGER BE THE PM**

The question is why did the talks fail? The answer lies in Nehru's jingoistic followers who sold him the idea that India should not concede any territory to China and should adopt the "no compromise" approach on Aksai Chin. The jingoistic followers suggested Nehru to accept a formula acceptable to 'Political Marketplace' (meant the opposition and the public). Traditional wisdom says that had India accepted the 'offer' of the Chinese, the border issue could have been permanently resolved. Later, Nehru himself voiced the fear by stating once "If I give them Aksai Chin, I shall no longer be the PM". Had Nehru accepted the offer, it would have had four consequences. First, there would have been no 1962 clash. Second, there would have been a solved border. Third, there would have been no face-offs on the boundary as the one in 2020 (explained in detailed later in this chapter); and fourth, something that India's intelligence community knows and which they never disclosed but we would do so here that Chinese even told India that they would accept India's sovereignty on Jammu and Kashmir vis-à-vis Pakistan.

### **FORWARD POLICY OF INDIA AND ARMED COEXISTENCE STRATEGY OF MAO**

In 1960, China replaced their 1956 maps and issued new maps. In the new maps of 1960, China did cartographic aggression and claimed additional 5000 square km Indian Territory of Sirijap and Spanggur Lake. The Spanggur gap is a mountain pass in the South of mountains in the Pangong Lake. On 2nd November 1961, a meeting happened in PMO in New Delhi and a forward policy was announced. It was decided to establish forward posts in all areas claimed by China by Indian Army. The government ordered that Indian army should first establish posts in Western and Central sectors where China has no posts. Doing so would ensure that India has an upper hand. The army was told to avoid physical clashes with China. The army was instructed to first establish logistical and supply stations. Then from these stations, close to the boundary, the military would establish posts (forward posts) at the border. The army began to establish forward posts at the border without establishing logistic stations. The Indian concept of forward policy was to establish forward posts on the border and India believed that if the forward post is created, China would not establish their post or destroy Indian posts and the area would be under Indian control. As India began to create posts November 1961, it was in April 1962 that Mao ordered the armed coexistence strategy. Under this strategy, Mao ordered PLA to counter-encircle the Indian posts to outmanoeuvre Indian posts. The Panchsheel Agreement was signed in 1954 and was valid for 8 years. In the Panchsheel Agreement, there was a clause that either of the party could seek extension to the agreement. On 3rd December 1961, China informed India that it would seek a fresh agreement and would not like to continue with the existing agreement. India communicated that an essential condition for fresh negotiation is that China should reverse the aggressive tactics on the border. As India remained insistent on a pre-condition for fresh talks, the negotiation did not proceed and on 3rd June 1962, Panchsheel Agreement collapsed. As the agreement collapsed, India closed the trading marts in Gyantse, Tarung and Gartok while China closed their trading marts at Calcutta and Kalimpong.

## THE NAMKA CHU, DHOLA POST AND 1962 SINO-INDIAN CONFLICT

In June 1962, the Indian army had established a forward post near the Namka Chu River in Tawang and named that post as Dhola, based on the name of the mountain near the river. China objected to the post saying that the post is located in the North of McMahon line and is deep inside China and India has no right of territorial occupation in this area. India insisted that the post was in proper Dhola region only and not in China. As the Chinese objected, the GOC of Army in the area suggested that the post be relocated to Thagala Ridge. By the time Army HQ granted the permission, Chinese established their post in Thagala Ridge. On 13th September 1962, Chinese troops made an announcement from other side of Namka Chu River that India should retreat from the post. As India ignored the advice, on 20th September 1962, Chinese dropped a grenade on the Indian post. The grenade was thrown by China to compel India to subdue and withdraw by inculcating a sense of fear. The government decided to respond to the grenade attack by deciding to evict China from Namka Chu. The Indian side sent a patrol team on 9th October 1962 near Namka Chu. As the patrol team reached close, China vehemently fired back on India. The entire dream and assumption of forward policy collapsed as Chinese resorted to aggression. Nehru was in Colombo when the Chinese fired and from Colombo he addressed the press asserting that India has ordered the army to evict the Chinese from Namka Chu. This address of Nehru from a foreign soil was perceived as aggressive by China. Mao decided to teach a painful military lesson to India. On 20th October 1962, Chinese attacked from Namka Chu and crossed over and reached Tezpur, Bomdi La and Tawang. The Chinese launched attacks on Western front at Galwan Post near Daulat Beg Oldi. Seeing the Chinese aggression, India sought American military help. President Kennedy dispatched an aircraft carrier to Bay of Bengal and squadrons of the US air force were dispatched. Seeing the American support, the Chinese on 21st November 1962 declared a unilateral ceasefire and retreated to 20 km of the Line of Actual Control (LAC). On 24th November 1962, Zhou Enlai told Nehru to settle the border peacefully. He urged that till the time both parties do not settle the border peacefully, neither of the sides should undertake patrolling up to 20 km of LAC. The term LAC was used for the first time by China here. Zhou Enlai asserted that LAC meant the customary line in Western and Central sector and Eastern line of LAC as per McMahon line. LAC was described only in general terms on maps not to scale by the Chinese. As per Zhou, the Eastern sector coincides with McMahon line and the Western and Middle sector coincides with the traditional customary line that has consistently been pointed out by China. Nehru insisted that China should go back to its position as it held on the 8th September 1962, which was the position before Chinese had occupied Namka Chu post. Nehru rejected the Chinese use of term LAC because he stated that the Chinese line called LAC is nothing but a disconnected series of points on a map that could be joined up in many ways. Nehru was adamant that Chinese should retreat from the positions they held on 8th September 1962. Zhou rejected this proposal of Nehru. China did not demand Indian retreat but asserted that China may strike back if India fires on posts in Chinese territory. However, Chinese continued to occupy Aksai Chin in Ladakh in the Western sector illegally after the end of the conflict. The Indian diplomat, Vasant Vasudeo Paranjpe, aptly described Chinese advances when he remarked that the PLA went through Indian army in 1962 like knife through butter. In November 1962, China went 20 km behind their 1959 position, thus creating two versions of LAC, the 1959 version (mentioned by Zhou to Nehru in a letter) and 1962 version (which they advocated after the conflict).

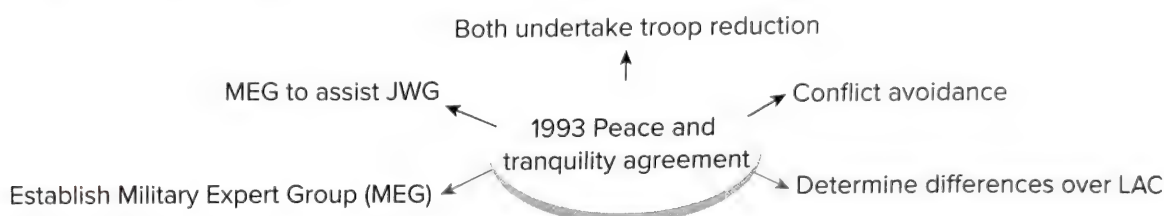
## INDIA AND CHINA BOUNDARY ISSUE FROM 1962 CONFLICT ONWARDS

Since 1962 conflict, India maintained a simple approach to the border question. In 1976, the government in India formed China Study Group. The aim of the group was to study the limits to patrolling and rules of engagement at the border. This was needed because Chinese patrols were coming quite frequently in the disputed regions. Diplomatically, India favoured a sector-by-sector approach and till 1979, maintained the position that resolution of border dispute was the precondition for all diplomatic talks. It was in 1979 that when Atal Bihari Vajpayee visited China and broke the ice. China under Deng Xiaoping proposed a 'package approach' to Vajpayee. Under the package deal, Deng Xiaoping asserted that if India accepts status quo on Western sector, China would accept McMahon line in the East. India rejected the deal and asserted that sector-by-sector approach be adopted and border talks are a precondition for any other talks. Throughout this period, tranquility at border was maintained with minor skirmishes, including one at Sumdorongchu in 1988.



## AGREEMENT ON MAINTENANCE OF PEACE AND TRANQUILITY AT THE LAC

In 1988, during Rajiv Gandhi's visit to China, a Joint Working Group (JWG) was established and the border as a precondition for further negotiation point was dropped. Rajiv Gandhi maintained that India and China should start diplomatic cooperation on all other fronts minus the border and the border talk should not affect the bilateral ties. In 1991, Chinese Premier Li Peng visited India and this was the time when Li Peng and Narsimha Rao developed an understanding to maintain some peace and tranquility at the LAC. This was the first times the Indian side began to display some positivity on the term called LAC, which till now they refused to accept. China accepted the growing pragmatism and this paved way in 1993 for Agreement on Maintenance of Peace and Tranquility at the LAC (signed when Narsimha Rao paved a visit to China in 1993). As per the agreement, the two sides decided to avoid military conflicts on the border by reducing troops and decided to establish a Military Expert Group (MEG) to determine differences over the LAC. At that time there was no attempt made to solve the border question but it was decided to maintain tranquility at the border. This was also in sync with what China as they too favoured tranquility and peace at the border and allow bilateral economic cooperation. It is important to note that the two sides in the 1993 Agreement agreed that LAC was unqualified and neither of the parties referred to the LAC of 1959 version or 1962 version.

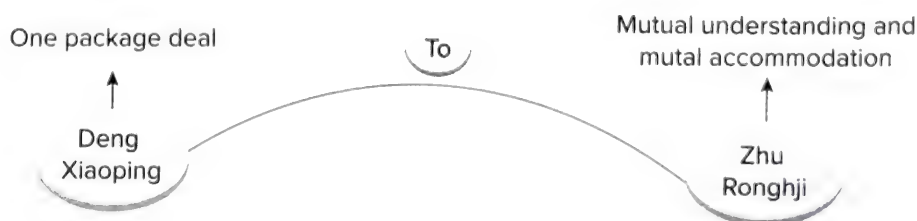


## CONFIDENCE BUILDING MEASURE AGREEMENT 1996

Till 1993, China maintained two personnel for each one personnel from India. In 1993, as a part of Confidence Building Measure (CBM), China proposed one for one cutback where each will reduce equal numbers. But India said that geography favours China and on the side of India there is a difficult terrain, so the adjusted ratio formula was adopted under which both sides decided to maintain mutual and equal security and decided to cut troops mutually of equal numbers to equalise total troop presence on the border. Subsequently in 1996, India and China concluded a CBM Agreement and agreed for a no war in future, no fly zone at the LAC, ceiling of military exercises and minimum military at LAC. The 1996 CBM also talked about exchange of LAC maps to reduce potential conflicts.

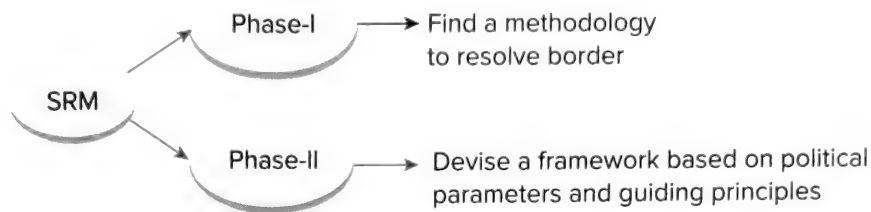


The approach since 2002 shifted from earlier one package deal to mutual understanding and mutual accommodation. The architect of this approach was Chinese Premier Zhu Ronghji. The objective of Mutual accommodation approach meant a give and take solution to resolve border. In 2002, India and China exchanged maps for the Middle sector. They also 'shared' the maps for Western sector but never formally exchanged them. Till today, there is no publicly available map depicting the version of India's LAC.



## SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE TALK MECHANISM

In 2003, Vajpayee initiated Special Representative Talk Mechanism (SRM) where higher political leadership is involved to resolve border issues on a sector-by-sector basis and announce an agreement only when all sectors are negotiated. The SRM aims to find a methodology to resolve border and devise effective frameworks based on political parameters and guiding principles. In SRM, the negotiations were to be conducted by higher political representatives who would explore a framework solution. The focus was shifted to identifying common principles for resolving the border issues. The concept of the Special Representative Talk (SRT) was that both sides should not see the border issue through history alone but through the prism of political negotiations. The approach here was to first accept a territorial concession and then demarcate the border on the ground.



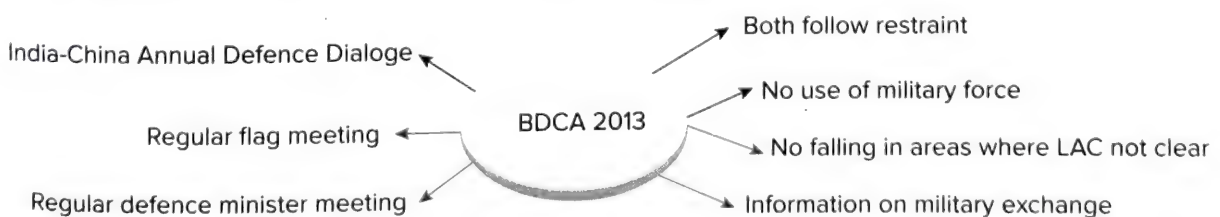
## SIKKIM FACTOR IN INDIA-CHINA BOUNDARY QUESTION

Sikkim, as an issue, persisted till 2005. China always questioned the status of Sikkim and raised the issue of its merger with India. China maintained Sikkim could be resolved only as a part of package deal but soon realised that if it continues to hold the Sikkim rhetoric, India will open up the Tibetan issue. In 2005, during Wen Jiabao's visit to India, the Chinese presented a new map showing India with Sikkim as a part of India. In 2006, they opened Nathu La pass but incursions in Sikkim continued to be an issue till date. In 2005, the two sides also signed the Political Parameters and Guiding Principles for Settlement of the India and China Boundary Question. Under this agreement, the two decided to accept prominent geographical features to determine the basis of the border. This means that India asserted a principle that the border should be the Himalayan watershed was accepted. Secondly, there was an agreement that while solving the border, both parties will acknowledge the interests of the settled populations.

## WORKING MECHANISM FOR CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION AND BDCA AGREEMENT

In 2012, India and China established a Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Affairs. This mechanism is led by Joint Secretary level officers on both sides.

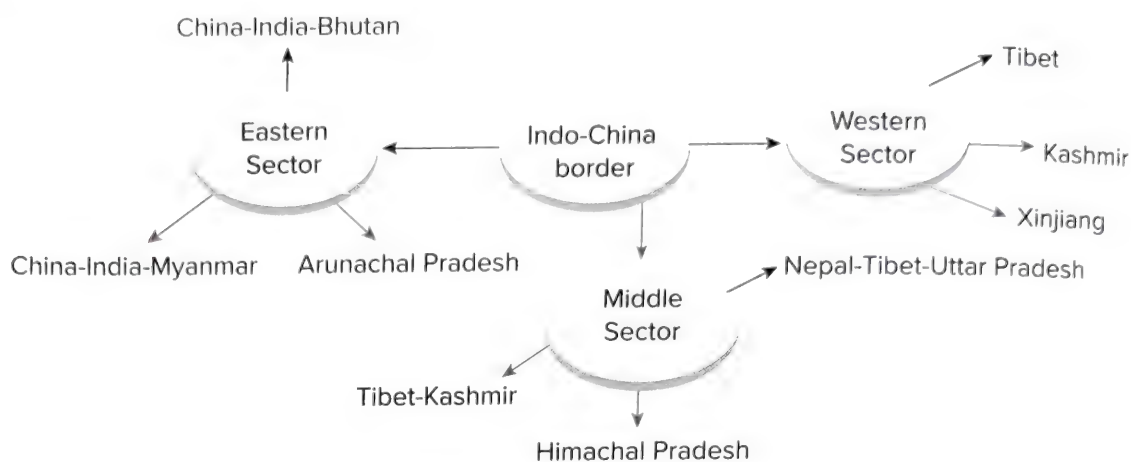
On 23rd October 2013, Manmohan Singh government concluded the Border Defence Cooperation Agreement (BDCA). The BDCA has brought an end to tailing by two sides. Now tell and tail signs (which were used by both parties till now in the Western sector to manage the border) were not used and this would enhance security of the border as absence of tell and tail signs would lead to avoidance of face-offs and reduction of tensions. The BDCA has initiated a concept of regular flag meetings of defence forces and regular meetings of defence ministers.



India-China border is divided into three sectors. The Middle sector or Central sector is relatively peaceful, unlike the Western and Eastern sectors. In Western sector, India alleges that China has occupied part of the Kashmir region and

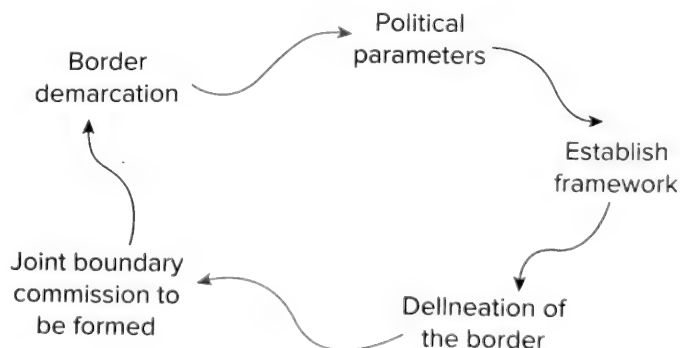


also an area gifted in 1963 by Pakistan to China, along with the Aksai Chin area of Ladakh, occupied as Xinjiang. In the Eastern sector, China insists that the 90,000 square kilometre Arunachal Pradesh is part of China and refuses to accept the McMahon line.



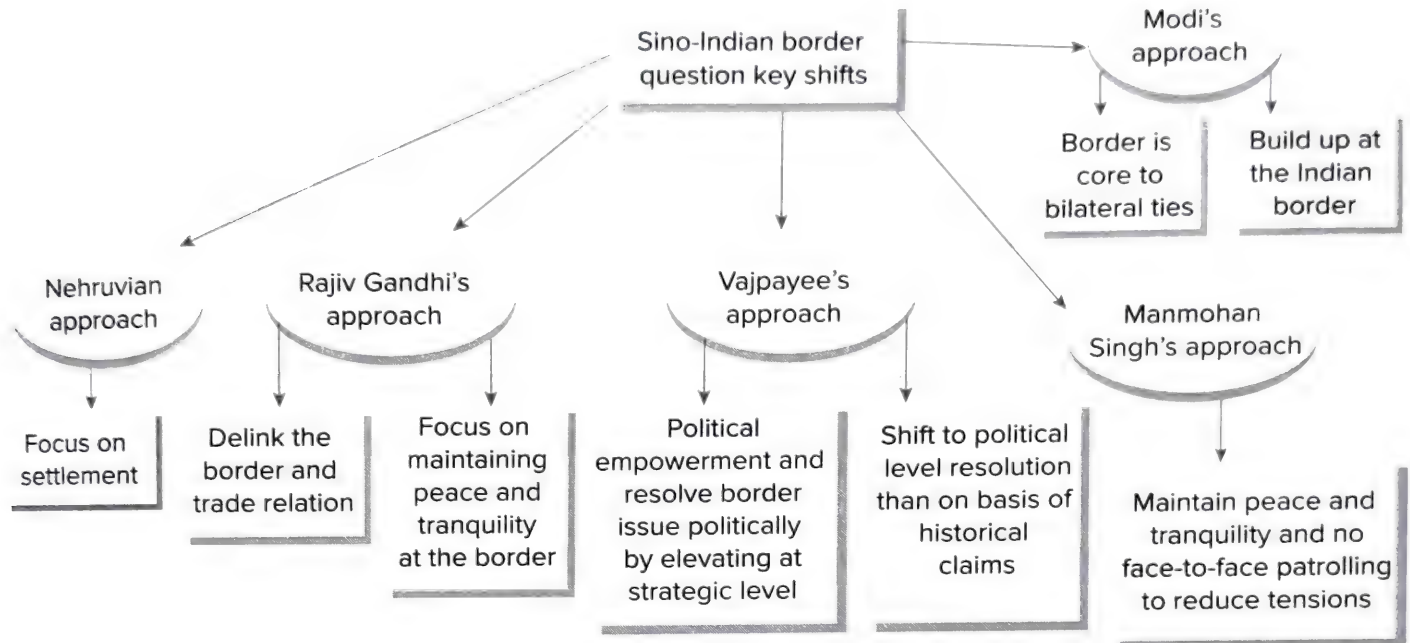
## CHINESE NEGOTIATION ON BORDER QUESTION WITH INDIA

In 2015, Modi government tried to clarify maps for the LAC. The Chinese rejected the proposal and stated that they did try earlier to clarify the LAC, but that had led to difficulties, thus, they asserted that both sides should strive to maintain peace and tranquillity and not make things complicated. Thus, LAC till today remains a conceptual construct, which is neither demarcated on the map, nor on the ground and nor agreed mutually by both countries. Recently, Indian intelligence agencies have studied Chinese negotiational behaviour. The studies say that China can negotiate fast if it has a favourable solution in sight, but delays and advises patience in case it senses an unfavourable solution for itself. In case of Central Asia and Russia, China solved borders disputes quickly, while with India it knows that the border dispute has little or no possibility to be resolved in terms favourable to it. Consequently, there is a kind of freeze and the conspicuous lack of any sense of urgency. China claims Tawang saying it was a part of Mongul district and sixth Dalai Lama was born in Tawang. China has courted trouble in the Eastern sector by refusing IAS officers of Arunachal visa, saying residents of Arunachal need no visa to visit their own country. Even today China maintains the same policy. Thus, today, even under the Modi government, the border negotiations go on, and are carried out on the same framework.



The problem however is that for China, the border issue is more of India-Tibet issue and China wants to make serious concessions in South Tibet or Arunachal Pradesh. This is unacceptable to India as Arunachal sends Members to the Parliament in India. The major source of contestation is thus Tibet. Despite 22 rounds of SRT, the two sides have not been able to reach a consensus. Even if we assume that the two sides are able to resolve their acrimony over border issue and minimise their tensions over Pakistan as an irritant, it will still not be possible for the two to end their overall conflict.

This is because the two are civilisational giants and both see each other as aspirational great powers. Such an aspiration is bound to create a space for the contest for China by India in Tibet, Xinjiang, Yunnan, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Mongolia and by China for India in Kashmir, Punjab and North East. Despite the contest of power, China knows very well that it cannot antagonise India beyond a limit as doing so will compel India to develop proximity to the US, which is something China will never want. Thus, the two will remain strategic adversaries and still maintain confidence that they can cooperate.



India and China do not have a strategic partnership yet but they have a tactical engagement. However, the tactical engagement is with depth and not a short-term foreign policy adjustment. It is important to note that today China follows the strategy of neutralisation with India. This means that China will try to inhibit India by pursuing a policy, which may be inimical to interests of China but will not accept any constraint on its own policies that, may undermine the security interests or sensitivities of India. This proves that the relationship is complex, which is not a threat to each other, but one that is best defined as a bivalent relationship. In this context, India needs a diplomatic strategy with China, which is a harmonious mixture of imaginative diplomacy, firmness, defence preparedness and a readiness to explore options that may allow India to benefit from technological and economic strength of Chinese.

## DIPLOMATIC AND MILITARY MECHANISMS BETWEEN INDIA AND CHINA

China continues to believe in Mao's articulation of what they call as Five Fingers of the Tibetan Palm. This construct implies that Tibet and Xinjiang are the Chinese palm and they need to liberate the fingers of the palm, which were Ladakh, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh.

The LAC often becomes a flashpoint between India and China. Both nations have a plethora of mechanisms that include

1. India and China Border CBM
2. India and China Border Personnel Meeting
3. India and China Meetings of the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on Border Affairs (WMCC)
4. India and China Strategic Guidance Route

To tackle various aspects of the boundary, the two sides have negotiated under the 22 rounds of SRT.



## THE 22ND ROUND OF SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE TALKS: AN ANALYSIS

The 22nd SRT happened in New Delhi in 2019. The discussions were constructive and forward looking where both sides decided to intensify the efforts to conclude a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable solution to the LAC. In the 22nd meeting, India asserted that there is a need to view the boundary question from a strategic perspective. China asserted that a mutually acceptable solution could be a positive signal to the world that the two ancient and historic civilisations can peacefully coexist, while resolving issues through consultation and dialogue. Despite all this rhetoric, which has been repeated every time, the Chinese intransigence has delayed the delineation of the LAC on the ground. It is in India's interest to solve the border issue with priority as doing so leaves India with Pakistan as the sole adversaries, probably something not in the strategic thought of China, as it may disturb their own Asian game plan. There is a growing belief in the Indian strategic community that China is delaying the solution to the border question (as Deng Xiaoping said in 1988 that let the border issue be dealt by future generations), as it wants to enhance its comprehensive national power, which would then enable China to dictate terms to India. However, to be pragmatic, the long-term solution is to go for 'swap' diplomacy where India can keep Arunachal and relinquish claims over Aksai Chin. The pragmatism from Indian side is to accept that Aksai Chin is the strategic artery connecting China to Xinjiang and Tibet, the two most restive provinces of the Middle Kingdom. In 2020, both sides were looking at 'early harvest' and were discussing 'proposals' to resolve the matter.

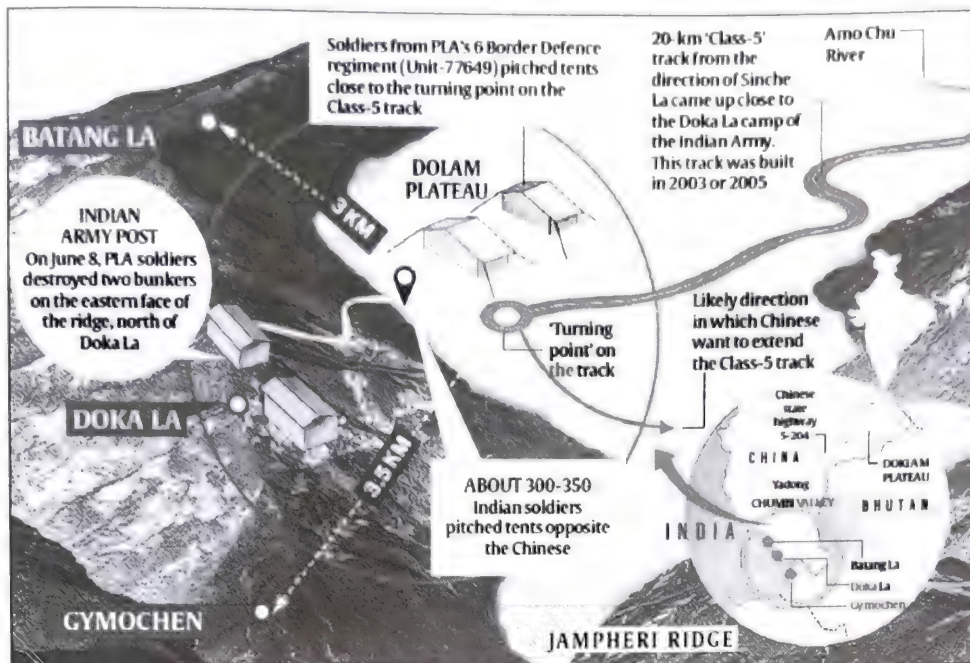
## CHINA AND INDIA: INTERNAL SECURITY AGREEMENT

A new evolving feature of Sino-India relationship was visible in the form of the two sides signing an Internal Security Agreement in 2018 (as an important de-escalatory measure post Doklam crisis). This agreement is a source of cooperation between the two states despite elements of constraints that range from Pakistan, abrogation of Article 370 and border dispute (Samar Lungpa, Trig Heights, Depsang bulge, Kongka La, Pangong Tso, Spanggur Gap, Mount Sajun, Dumchele, Demchok, Chumur in Eastern Ladakh; and Namka Chu, Sumdrong Chu, Yangste, Asaphilla, Long Ju, Dichu in Arunachal Pradesh; and Kaurik, Shipki La, Barahoti and Pulan Sunda in the Central sector are the twenty places where the border overlaps) and opposition of China to Indian membership of NSG. This new internal security agreement (which was being negotiated since 2015) is a continuation of the Wuhan spirit of 2018 (where there was a consensus to establish an umbrella agreement) and an unorthodox new diplomacy India has initiated (with patience ingrained as a diplomatic virtue) to seek behavioural change of China. The new agreement has identified four themes of cooperation. They include terrorism, narcotics and human trafficking, intelligence sharing and disaster management. Significance of the agreement signed is that it can yield results related to cross-border infiltration matters. It will establish a mechanism for forewarning in case of floods and help in better planning of disaster management. As terrorism is one of the components of the new agreement, it shows the rising awareness of China in tackling terrorism as a threat it may face to its ambitious Belt and Road Initiative.

## DOLAM CRISIS 2017, CHINESE THREE WARFARE STRATEGIES AND SALAMI SLICING

The issue between India and China happened in the Dolam plateau (which is in Doklam area), which is different from the Doklam plateau (which is located 30 km to the North East of the Dolam plateau and is called Donglang by China). The Sino-Indian standoff happened in a tri-junction where borders of Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet meet, which is disputed. The Sino-Indian boundary in Sikkim (not a part of India-China LAC), though settled, is not demarcated on a map. The disputed claims on the tri-junction are based on the individual interpretation of China and India on the basis of 1890 Calcutta Convention. The disputed tri-junction is claimed by India at a place called Batang La while China claims the tri-junction at 6.5 km to the South of Batang La at a place called Gymochen. In 2012, under the SRT mechanism, India and China decided to maintain status quo in this disputed area to their competing claims and resolve the dispute in consultation with Bhutan. A ridgeline runs from the Batang La in the North to Gymochen in the South where there is a pass known as the Doka La. One ridge line, 500 metres high, runs eastward from Batang La till Amo Chu river while the other runs eastwards from Gymochen to Amo Chu river and is called the Jampheri ridge. In the centre of the two ridges is 89 square kilometres bowl called Dolam plateau. Indian Army has a post in Doka La. The Batang La is the de-jure border while Doka La is the de-facto border. China has a motorable road called state highway S-204 that comes from Shigatse in Tibet to the northeast of the Nathu-La at a point called Yatung. From Yatung to Asam are unmetalled roads that come to Doka-La, which is a

20 km long Class-5 Track (capable of carrying a load vehicles like a jeep, etc.). At the end of 20 km point of the Class-5 Track in the Dolam plateau, near Doka La, is a turning point (barely few hundred metres away from an Indian Army post in Doka La) from where vehicles can reverse and traverse back.



Picture Courtesy: Indian Express

## THE CHINESE AND THEIR ROAD DILEMMAS

On 16th June 2017, a Chinese road construction party, consisting of some 100 men with earth moving equipment, came to the turning point and started surveys to extend the road towards Jampheri ridge. Seeing this, the Indian Army troops at the camp from Doka La came down in the Dolam Plateau near the turning point (in the territory of Bhutan) and formed a human chain, preventing the Chinese to make the road and the standoff began. Subsequently, the Indian and Chinese troops (PLA's 6 Border Defence Regiment Unit-77649) established tents in the area. India asserted that the creation of the road alters the status quo of 2012 (as established by the SRT) and if China created a road to Jampheri ridge, it would reduce the distance of China to access India's chicken's neck by 50 km. Doing so would not bring China in India's artillery range but it will affect India's offensive deployments in the area. As the standoff continued, China insisted that Indian troops withdraw from Dolam plateau (as it belonged to Bhutan and was not a territory in dispute with India) and go back to Doka La while India insisted on pre 16th June 2017 position (and decided to stay in the area to assist Bhutan as per Article 2 of India-Bhutan Friendship Treaty).

## CHINESE THREE-WARFARE STRATEGY AT WORK

As the two sides got embroiled in an eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation, India began to build up troops along the LAC fearing that China could open up a new front elsewhere. At the same time China unleashed a psychological warfare with a strong verbal barrage driven with a motive to back off Indian troops unilaterally. This Chinese approach was very much in sync with Chinese Three Warfare Strategy (comprising media war, psychological war and legal war) developed by Chinese Central Military Commission in 2003 and reinforced in 2010. For India, the idea was not to back off (despite the fact that India for the first time was in the territory of a third nation—Bhutan, making this standoff different from the standoffs in Depsang in 2013 and Chumar in 2014, both of which happened on Indian territory) as doing so would have affected India's credibility in the neighborhood and ASEAN region where it is trying to position itself as a Net Security Provider. After a gap of 72 days, both sides diplomatically defused the crises by an agreement where both mutually decided to disengage the troops from the region and re-establish the status quo ante. Indian troops have retreated to Doka La but continue to



occupy the vantage points on the top areas of the ridge while China has decided to halt the road construction activity but will continue to patrol the region. Both sides have moved out 'under verification' and China has agreed to 'make adjustments with the situation on the ground'. Xi Jinping demonstrated maturity while defusing the issue and succeeded in saving the BRICS Summit in Xiamen in 2017 (where Indian Prime Minister eventually met the Xi) while also succeeded in safeguarding his reputation for the 19th Congress of the Communist Party.

## **SALAMI SLICING AND CHINESE SECURITY POLICY**

An analysis of the Dolam standoff proves that China again resorted to Salami Slicing (a term coined by Hungarian Communist Matyaas Rakosi in 1940s and in military terminology known as cabbage strategy) to make territorial grabs in the Himalayas (similar to its previous grabs of Aksai Chin, Tibet and Paracel Islands). Salami Slicing means a strategy of carrying out small actions in a clandestine manner that eventually accumulate into a larger action. China, to execute Salami Slicing, initiates territorial claims by staking claims to a territory. Then, carries out an intensive propaganda of all three types (in sync with Chinese Three Warfare Strategy) at all platforms (domestic and international) to claim the territory. The propaganda by China is so intense that it positions the territory in concern as a 'dispute'. Then China uses all its diplomatic and military might to resolve the dispute by avoiding a forceful intervention.

## **CHINESE 'DO-AND-BE DAMNED', 'DON'T-DO-AND-BE DAMNED' QUANDARY**

Xi Jinping masterminded the standoff to punish India for its OBOR Lèse-majesté by weaning Bhutan away from India but eventually ended up in a situation of 'do-and-be damned, don't-do-and-be damned' quandary. Though the Sino-Indian standoff is resolved (however the border infrastructure built by Chinese was not removed or dismantled), positioning India as a mature and responsible status-quo power, India created a template for other countries to check China. The Dolam standoff presented to the world, the new border doctrine of India of "proactive diplomacy with firm ground positioning".

India needs to strengthen its critical border infrastructure, demarcate maps on settled sectors of the border and resolve pending border disputes with China to avoid future standoffs of this nature ahead. India needs to undertake some countermeasures at Siliguri corridor. As the corridor is just 22 km in width at its narrowest point, India should firstly enter into a treaty with Bangladesh to secure transit of military equipment during military times. This is possible by first negotiating a civilian traffic and trade activities to start with. Doing so would add a layer of strategic depth in the region and alleviate severance concerns in the Northeast. The next step is to strengthen the Doka La tri-junction by creating a blacktop road that will reduce the travel time to reach the area in future. Thirdly, India should construct underground tunnels, which allow multi-modal transit at the Siliguri corridor. Underground tunnelling is going to be costly but will give the military more room to take hard military options. During peacetime, the same can be used for trade and tourism to the Northeast.

## **LADAKH STANDOFF-2020: A RIDDLE WRAPPED IN A MYSTERY**

We need to understand four concepts of geography to understand the Ladakh standoff better.

First is the concept of a ridge. In a simple language, when there is a continuous elevated terrain with sloping sides, we call it a ridge. So imagine the ridge as a long but narrow continuous top of a mountain, where the sides of the mountain tend to slope away from the narrow top on either side.

The second concept is of mountainous spurs. A mountainous spur is a long but a gentle sloping tongue of ground. This spur runs down from a hill to the lower ground and provide access to and from the ground to the hill for the walkers.

The third concept is of a valley. A valley is a depression of land that is scoured and washed out by a combination of forces of gravity, water and snow.

The fourth concept is related to Pangong Lake. The Pangong Lake is also called Pangong Tso. It is an endorheic lake. This means that the water of the lake remains in the basin area. It has no outflow and the water either seeps in the ground of the lake or it evaporates. The water in the lake comes from the glaciers in the nearby mountain melt and keep feeding the Pangong Lake. The Pangong Lake is a salt-water lake and it gets water from the melting of the glaciers, meaning it is fresh water. Since the lake has no outflow, the water gradually turns saline. The water of the lake is not fully saline, but brackish in nature (not as salty as sea water but saltier than the fresh water).

## S. JAISHANKAR'S ACTION-REACTION THEORY

Since the Chinese Revolution of 1949, the leaders of China articulated their vision for their country, which rested upon making China an ambitious superpower with nuclear arsenal. This ambitious vision, realistic in scope, saw no Asian rival. Thus, neutralising India became a policy priority for Chinese, for which a partnership with Pakistan was built in 1963. Since then, Pakistan has played a valuable role in the strategic calculus of China by sustaining a 'hot' war on its borders with India and keeping the option of a two front war open. In Chinese Grand Strategy, an undefined LAC is a core instrument to embarrass India and keep India off the balance by repeatedly created transgressions on the border because it allows China to define the LAC as per their own interests. The Chinese land grabs are pre-mediated and blunt messages of dominance and a political pressure point for India. It is in this backdrop that we need to note that it is time for India to respond to Chinese by not being tied down in a defensive mode.

After the Dolam crisis in 2017, the matter related to India and China was raised in the Standing Committee on External Affairs (chaired by Shashi Tharoor) in the 16th Lok Sabha. The committee asserted that there is always a need to have healthy scepticism in dealing with China because of the 'deliberate encirclement policy of India' by China. Appearing before the Committee at that time was the then Foreign Secretary and now Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar. He asserted that India and China have a lot of transgressions and one of the most contested areas in the Western sector is the Pangong Lake. He stated that the lake is a contested region because the lake is too big (135 km) and both sides have a different perception as to where does the LAC pass in the lake. This is when S. Jaishankar informed the committee that India and China are likely to have a relationship based on 'action-reaction' as India builds border infrastructure at the LAC.

## THE HEART OF THE LADAKH ISSUE

India's border in Ladakh is 857 square kilometres and the International Boundary is 368 square kilometres while the LAC is 489 square kilometres. The two have differing perceptions at LAC at Samar Lungpa, Depsang Plains, Hot Springs, Changlung, Kungkara-Phobrang, Sarjap, Spanguar and Dhumsale.



Picture Courtesy: Indian Express



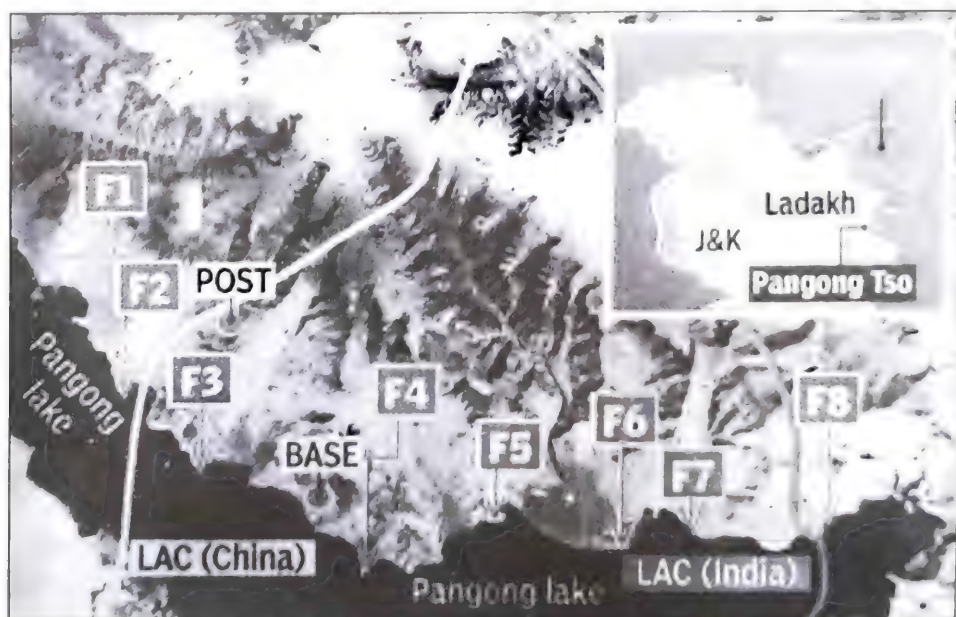
In the month of May 2020, the Chinese increased their number of troops at the LAC at many specific locations. The first is Patrol Point 14 in Galwan, Patrol Points 15 and 17 in Gogra at Ladakh, Naku La in Sikkim, Hot Springs and Finger-4 in Pangong Lake, Ladakh. There seems to be an enlargement of dispute by the Chinese because they entered the Indian territory of Galwan and Naku La for the first time in 2020.

## CHINESE GOLD RUSH IN LADAKH

In 2020, the Chinese built a blacktopped road near the Indian post of Gogra in Ladakh. It is believed that this road near the Indian post would provide China with valuable access to gold because the mountain ranges at Gogra have this valuable mineral in abundance and Gogra is often called as 'Gold Mountain' amongst the Ladakhi people. This road would also enable the Chinese to mobilise men and material resources quickly.

## THE CONFLICTUAL GEOGRAPHY OF PANGONG TSO

The situation began in May 2020 when China began to build structures from Finger-4 to Finger-8 along the Pangong Lake. Pangong Lake is a huge lake at an altitude of 13,900 feet in Ladakh Union Territory of India. Two-thirds of the lake is under the control of the Chinese and the Chinese control extends from Tibet to India. On the northern bank of the lake is Sirijap Range from where several cliffs come out and are called "Finger series". The area adjoining the lake has mountainous spurs. These protrusions or mountainous spurs in security terminology are called 'fingers' by both sides. India and China have eight fingers or spurs all along the lake. These fingers allow the troops to create fortifications and bunkers for patrolling. India and China have a different perspective of LAC because the LAC is not demarcated on any map and has also become a source of friction between both sides in the recent times. As per India, when it comes to the Pangong Lake, the LAC runs North to South and Indian perception of the LAC is that it runs till Finger-8 and is at the South of Finger-8 (though Indian actual control is till Finger-4 only, but India has been patrolling up to Finger-8 for decades). However, the Chinese claim that the LAC (as per their perception), runs in between Finger-2 and Finger-3. India has a physical presence in the region till Finger-4 and also has one ITBP post between Finger-3 and Finger-4. However, for many decades, India has been patrolling from West to East. This means, historically, India has been patrolling from Finger-1 to Finger-8 (till the point where it perceives the LAC located between Finger-7 and Finger-8). The Chinese on the other hand claim that the LAC lies between Finger-2 and Finger-3 and they assert that India's legal claims are only at a place till Finger-4 and the rest, from Finger-4 to Finger-8 and beyond is an area belonging to the Chinese.



Picture Courtesy: Indian Express

Though the problem erupted now, it can be traced back to 1999. When India was undertaking operations against Pakistan for their intrusion in Kargil, the Chinese took advantage of Indian forces diverted to Kargil and began to build up a 4.5-km dirt track (imagine this like a rudimentary jogging track around a park we see in urban areas or what is called in rural areas as a "pakdandi") till Huangyangtan Base near National Highway G-219. This dirt track of the Chinese began from their rear bases from their side of the LAC and reached up to Finger-4 area (an area claimed by India) and crossed till Finger-8 and subsequently reached East at places called Sirijap-1 and Sirijap-2 (both areas on the Chinese side of the LAC and located on the rear sides of Finger-8). The Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) had pointed out the construction of the dirt track to the then Vajpayee Government, but the government chose to maintain a convenient blind eye. This lack of response by the Vajpayee government gave impetus to China and slowly over time, they blacktopped the dirt track and made it a permanent road. After the road became permanent, the PLA began to patrol the area from Sirijap to Finger-8 and from Finger-8 till Finger-2. However, the PLA used to only patrol the area with their vehicles but they never physically occupied the area despite their claims up to Finger-2. The problem is that now, the Chinese have built a series of defences all along from Finger-4 to Finger-8 and have also occupied their successive regional heights. This is what India called as the *change in status quo* in the disputed area. The Chinese are firm that the LAC is at Finger-4, which is around 8 km to the West of the LAC at Finger-8, which has always been patrolled by India. This means that the Chinese have been camping 8 km inside the Indian Territory. These defences led to a troop confrontation between Indian and Chinese on 5th and 6th May 2020. Since 6th May 2020, the Chinese have blocked all Indian patrols from Finger-4 to Finger-8 region. The Chinese have also been resorting to use of high-speed motorboats to deter India to patrol the region and denied patrolling to India in 50 square kilometres area which they have claimed.

## THE STRATEGIC INTERESTS OF CHINA IN PANGONG TSO

We have to note that the dominance of China in the Pangong Tso is not just a territorial dominance but dominance of a resource-rich lake. Chinese design suggests that they aim to snatch the Pangong Lake through a three-step design by snatching the lake from Sirijap in the North, Chuchul in the South and Pangong Lake in the middle. Doing so will enable Chinese to cutoff India from Chip Chap Plains, Aksai Chin (in the east side) and Shyok valley to North. This will lead to India be pushed South of Indus and West of Shyok and will allow Chinese to push India to accept Shyok and Indus as natural boundaries, thereby allowing China to get access to Siachen (because of south side of Karakoram in their control) from Depsang corridor till Tashkurgan junction, from where the CPEC crosses the Gilgit Baltistan region. This will make the Nubra valley and Indian presence at Siachen vulnerable and the Chinese access to Changala Pass via Lukung and Tangste would threaten the region of Indus valley. By doing this, Chinese can divert the waters of Shyok, Galwan and Chang Chemo Rivers to Aksai Chin and Ali regions successfully in the future.

## THE GALWAN VALLEY GRAND RIVALRY

During the colonial times, the British and the Chinese were very busy in a Great Game which unfolded not only in Afghanistan and Central Asia, but also from Leh to Karakoram Pass into Xinjiang. Today, the two aspirational powers of India and China happen to play the tail of the rivalry at strategic pivot all along their disputed mountainous boundaries.

The Galwan River was named after a Ladakhi explorer, Ghulam Rasool Galwan, who had assisted the British in various missions, including the ones led by Younghusband in 1890 and 1896. In 1892, Rasool once helped the British explorers who had lost their way during an expedition. Rasool paved path for the lost British explorers from a new way called Galwan Nala and brought them safely to Leh. After knowing this, the British government, in a reward, named the Nala (the valley) as Galwan valley.

Galwan River originates in Aksai Chin, on the Chinese side of the LAC and flows from east into India (in Ladakh) to meet Shyok River at the Indian side of the LAC. Galwan valley is located strategically between Ladakh on the west side and Aksai Chin on the east side and controlled by China. However, on the west of the Galwan valley are DSDBO road and Shyok River and on its east is Chinese National Highway G-219. The location of the LAC at Galwan valley is in the east of confluence of Galwan and Shyok rivers. It is up to the point of confluence where both parties have patrolled.

In 1962, under the Nehruvian 'Forward Policy', India built a post at Galwan Valley on 4th July 1962 and deployed 5 Jat regiment at Galwan. This post became a point of contention because this Indian post threatened communication of China



in Samzungling in the Eastern side of Karakoram. This is why, on 10th July 1962, as part of Chinese policy of 'armed coexistence', the Chinese deployed a battalion 100 metres to the Indian post at Galwan. The Chinese began to identify a few 'strongholds' (or areas that had the potential to threaten the Chinese communications) and the 5 Jat regiment was in occupation of one of the strongholds. India, in 1962, took up the matter with Chinese envoy and asserted that any aggression at Galwan will be treated as an act of aggression. On 19th October 1962, the Galwan post was one of the first to be attacked by the Chinese (as it was a 'stronghold' under 5 Jat Regiment) and the Chinese lost 10 soldiers in the scuffle while they inflicted a damage of 120 on the Indian side. Within 24 hours after the 19th October 1962 incident, India decided to remove seven stronghold areas and this enabled the Chinese to secure communication to three key posts of China at Galwan. Since 1962, Chinese maps have claimed Galwan valley, but the maps shown by Zhou in 1956 had shown the correct alignment where Galwan valley was shown as a part of India.

## THE DARBHUK-SHYOK-DAULET BEG OLDI (DS-DBO) ROAD FLASHPOINT

Earlier, India had an old road that connected Daulat Beg Oldi (an Indian post in Aksai Chin) to Ladakh via 17,500 feet high Sasser Pass, and this road was a part of Ancient Silk Road that connected Leh to Yarkand, but for most of the year, this road remained under snow. As an alternative to this Sasser Pass road, the Border Roads Organisation, decided to work upon two projects. The first was a "glaciated road" from Nubra Valley to Sasser Pass leading to Daulat Beg Oldi and the second is the DSDBO road.

India has been working on the Darbhuk–Shyok–Daulat Beg Oldi road for last fifteen years. This road was conceptualised after the Kargil conflict with Pakistan in 1999. India has a presence in the Daulat Beg Oldi (DBO) region, which is just 10 km west from the LAC at Aksai Chin, where India has a military post after Chinese occupied Aksai Chin in 1962. The DBO is a strategic area also because on its west is the Gilgit–Baltistan Area, from where the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) passes. Till now, the only way to reach out to DBO was through air support and use of CJ 130 aircrafts at the DBO airstrip. The DS-DBO road is a 255 km long road that connects Leh to Karakoram pass. The road was finally constructed in 2019 and is critical lifeline to the Sub-Sector North (SSN) of the Indian army. This road enables India to supply its troops with logistical support, which in its absence was dependent by air as stated above. This road also enables the logistical support with ease to be supplied to the troops deployed at Siachen Glacier. The DSDBO road provides the Indian Army an access to a small section of Tibet–Xinjiang Highway that passes via Aksai Chin (as the road runs parallel to the LAC at Aksai China). The DSDBO is an all-weather road because it also has 37 prefabricated military truss bridges.

Along with the road, in 2019, India also constructed a 430 meters bridge (called Colonel Chewang Rinchen Bridge, named after a local Ladakhi military hero) on the Shyok River (Shyok, that flows in northern Ladakh and Gilgit–Baltistan, itself is a tributary of Indus, and is also called river of Death by locals with tributaries that include Chip Chap, Galwan River, Chang Chenmo) at an altitude of 15,000 feet in the Galwan area (sandwiched between the Chang Chemo range and Karakoram range) to facilitate troop movement and assist local population. The construction of the bridge and DSDBO road compelled the Chinese to build 80 tents and temporary defence positions for faster reinforcements at the Galwan River. The PLA also has resorted to deliberately outnumber Indian troops whenever a face-off occurs.

The Chinese are upset with the DSDBO (Darbhuk–Shyok–Daulat Beg Oldi) road and the Galwan area bridge because they want to dominate this zone of LAC as they believe that any such infrastructure by India along the LAC can improve their access and patrolling at Aksai Chin, something that is perceived detrimental by China. So, the Chinese here have no difference of perception with respect to the LAC. This is so because the DSDBO road is 8 km within Indian Territory. For Chinese, their National Highway G-219 passes through the Aksai Chin and is the core link for Xinjiang and Tibet. The issue is that the Chinese want to maintain a military dominance and retain a tactical advantage against India, which they tend to lose, if the DSDBO is used by India. It is surprising that Chinese want to make Galwan a political fight by laying claim to a territory they never owned and whose claim was articulated by a military officer of China in 2020.



Picture Courtesy: Indian Express

## THE MOONLIGHT MASSACRE AND IMPLICATIONS ON BILATERAL RELATIONS

The Indian satellite images in June 2020 had shown that the Chinese had deployed a Brigade-sized force at Galwan and this ipso facto points out to their intent of staying on long. Since June it was seen that the Chinese PLA had crossed into the Indian side and were putting up in tents on the Indian side. This led to initiation of a disengagement process. On 6th June 2020, as part of the ongoing disengagement process, it was decided in a meeting of Corps Commanders that there will be a mutually agreed disengagement process and a buffer zone would be created between the LAC and at the junction of Shyok and Galwan Rivers (which the Chinese call the Y-Nala). Such a buffer zone would prevent future face-offs and the armies were to move back by kilometre as a first step of the disengagement process. On 15th June 2020, Colonel Santosh Babu of Bihar Battalion saw that there was still one tent left in the area. Being a Corps Commander, he decided to get the tent removed and during this time, a scuffle broke out, which led to severe casualties, in the moonlight. The Chinese General Zhao Zongqi, the commander of WTC, had approved the assault that took place. After the moonlight massacre, the Commander of PLA Colonel Zhang Shuli of Western Theatre Command of PLA, raised many red flags in India when on 15th June 2020, he asserted that China owns sovereignty over Galwan Valley region. Since then, China has staked a claim to the entire Galwan valley.

### 2020 GALWAN VALLEY INCIDENT

The soldiers, at the site on 15th June 2020, were carrying personal weapons but they did not use them because of a long-standing practice, governed by 1996 and 2005 agreements, of not using arms during a face-off or standoff.

Article VI (1) of the 1996 Agreement on Confidence-Building Measures in the Military Field Along the LAC in the India–China Border Areas says,

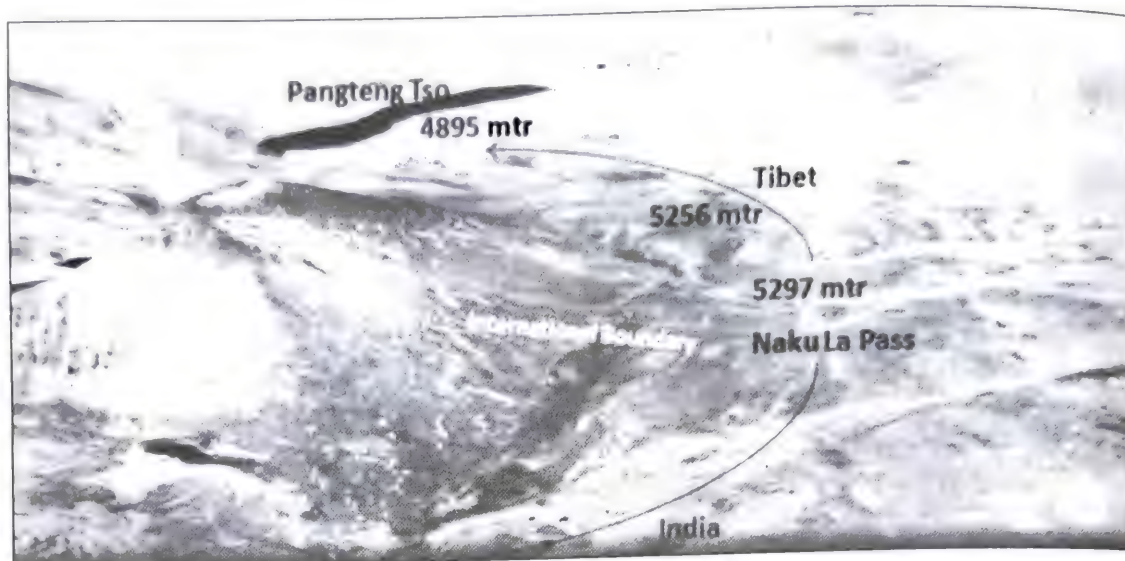
*With a view to preventing dangerous military activities along the line of actual control in the India–China border area. Neither side shall open fire, cause biodegradation, use hazardous chemicals, conduct blast operations or hunt with guns or explosives within two kilometres from the line of actual control. This prohibition shall not apply to routine firing activities in small arms firing ranges.*

However, Article VI(4), more applicable in the current instance of moonlight massacre, says, *If the border personnel of the two sides come in a face-to-face situation due to differences on the alignment of the line of actual control of any other reason, they shall exercise self-restraint and take all necessary steps to avoid an escalation of the situation. Both sides shall also enter into immediate consultations through diplomatic and/or other available channels to review the situation and prevent any escalation of tension.* But the 1996 agreement comes with a provision in Article X(1) which says that *the full implementation of some of the provisions of the present Agreement will depend on the two sides arriving at a common understanding of the alignment of the line of actual control in the India–China border areas, the two sides agree to speed up the process clarification and confirmation of the line of actual control.* Article 1 of the 2005 agreement, *the two sides will resolve the boundary question through peaceful and friendly consultations. Neither side shall use or threaten to use force against the other by any means.* The 2013 Border Defence Cooperation Agreement categorically stated that neither side shall use its military capability against the other.

### THE DISREGARD AT NAKU LA BY CHINESE

The Chinese skirmish and standoff at Naku La in May 2020 is a blatant disregard of Chinese commitments at Naku La. The Chinese in their designs at Naku La have violated the Sikkim–Tibet Convention of 1890. According to the Convention, the boundary in the area is based on the watershed principles. Its Article 1 states, *The boundary of Sikkim and Tibet shall be the crest of the mountain range separating the waters flowing into the Sikkim Teesta and its effluents from waters flowing into the Tibetan Mochu and northwards into other rivers of Tibet follows the above mentioned water-parting to the point where it meets Nipal Territory.* The Gazetteer of Sikkim in 1894, describes the physical features of Sikkim, and mentions the boundary that runs along Naku La–Chorten Nyima La and there is no ambiguity with respect to the location of the pass because the geographic realities cannot be altered.





Picture Courtesy: Indian Express

## DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TERRITORIAL CLAIMS AND LAC CLAIMS

It is at this juncture, we need to note, that territorial claims and LAC claims are two different things and regardless of the Chinese claims on Galwan, the reality is that both parties till now have agreed that LAC of both the countries ran through the Galwan valley. Sometimes, the distinction between LAC claims and territorial claims often gets blurred. The difference here lays in the fact that LAC claims means those areas that are effectively under the control of each side but not the territorial claim. Let us explain this. It means that even though the territorial claim of India lays 38,000 square kilometres across the LAC over entire Aksai Chin, but the LAC claims run through the Galwan Valley only. So, by claiming the Galwan Valley, China is trying to alter the LAC unilaterally which India calls as “exaggerated and untenable”.

According to the 1993 Border Peace and Tranquility Agreement (BPTA), India and China agreed to *strictly respect and observe the LAC between the two sides*. This referred to the LAC at the time, rendering irrelevant the LAC of 1959 or 1962. The 1993 Border Peace and Tranquility Agreement say, *when necessary, the two sides shall jointly check and determine the segments of the line of actual control where they have different views as to its alignment*. Clarifying, the LAC has also been explicitly codified in the 1996 Agreement on Confidence-Building Measures and subsequent agreements. China, however, has refused to exchange maps in the Western sector to take this process forward. The BPTA also said, *the two sides agree that references to the line of actual control in this agreement do not prejudice their respective positions on the boundary question*.

## THE TEMPLATE OF TWO-FRONT WAR

While India and China were involved in a standoff in Ladakh in 2020, the Chinese began to collaborate with the Pakistanis to pressurise India. Indian intelligence agencies informed the Indian government that Chinese compelled Pakistan to deploy 20,000 soldiers in the Gilgit–Baltistan region. These Pakistani troops had been deployed at the Line of Control with India with the sole objective to divert the attention of India on the Western front. According to the Indian intelligence agency assets, the Chinese also engaged in several meetings with a terrorist group called Al-Badr. The ISI of Pakistan created the Al-Badr in 1998. The ISI decided to use Al Badr independent of Hizbul Mujahadeen in the Kashmir valley. Along with Lashkar-e-Toiba, the Al Badr is the only group of the ISI that practices suicide terrorism. The Indian intelligence agency assets informed the Indian government that the Chinese in 2020 established links with Al Badr. There is a possibility that the Chinese could, in future, fund the Al Badr to resort to suicide terrorism in the Kashmir valley. The larger tactic of the Chinese in the Ladakh standoff has become clear. They want to pressurise India through alternative fronts. A military front with Pakistan and a diplomatic front with Nepal (explained in India and Nepal chapter) were used by China in 2020.

## INDIA'S NEW NON-LINEAR OPTIONS

After the moonlight massacre, the government proposed the creation of Emergency Procurement Procedure. Under this project, the three armed forces can add additional firepower to their arsenal, in consultation with Department of Military Affairs, by purchasing any new weapon up to 500 crores for each project under the procedure. After the Galwan valley incident, the government has deployed 3-Infantry Division based at Leh (with 10,000 to 12,000 soldiers in each division) to the operational alert areas while also activating air force bases all across the LAC. The government has also stated that the forces on the ground are given liberty to act, "in an extraordinary situation". India has to articulate more non-linear options. Chinese always favour bilateralism and they do so because the stronger party always benefits. India need not to play with Chinese tactics anymore and remain stuck with bilateralism. As a possible non-linear option, India should strive to stand up and support Japan, Vietnam and Taiwan, whenever they are bullied by Chinese expansionism.

## INDIAN DEMANDS OF RESTORATION OF STATUS QUO ANTE

Since the standoff has begun, India has resorted to a four-pronged strategy in discussion.

Firstly, India has insisted upon the *restoration of status quo ante* of the position that existed in April 2020 (and not status quo, because acceptance of status quo would mean accepting Chinese occupation of the territory).

Secondly, India has asked for mutual de-induction of troops at Pangong, Gogra, Hot springs and Galwan region. This means, India wants a withdrawal of all troops and artillery equipment (including tanks and guns), armoured vehicles, artillery units and infantry combat vehicles on Chinese side (which shall also be reciprocated by India) as a CBM.

Thirdly, India has advocated that Chinese should not obstruct the Indian road-building infrastructure at the LAC. This is so because India is carrying out all activities within their side of the boundary, over which it has a legal right.

Fourthly, Chinese have to restore the trust deficit by advocating restraint and advising their troops to observe the laid down protocols during face-to-face patrols.

## CHINESE STRATEGY OF WINNING WITHOUT FIGHTING

As the two sides got embroiled in an eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation, India has built up troops along the LAC fearing that China could open up a new front elsewhere. At the same time China unleashed a psychological warfare with a strong verbal barrage driven with a motive to back off Indian troops unilaterally. This Chinese approach was very much in sync with Chinese Three Warfare Strategy (comprising Media war, Psychological war and Legal war) developed by Chinese Central Military Commission in 2003 and reinforced in 2010. The basic principle of Chinese psychological war is clear that if it wants India to not take a decision that might be contrary to the interests of China, then it will do so by raising the risk of a kinetic conflict. Chinese government's media house Global Times has launched an all-out media war by asserting that by deploying troops at Galwan Valley, "India has harmed military relations between two countries" and they have accused Indian side of "purposefully instigating conflicts". The Global Times has stated that the "Chinese troops have tightened control in Galwan Valley after India trespasses Chinese territory and has built defensive fortifications and obstacles to unilaterally change the current border fortifications".

## MOONLIGHT MASSACRE—AN INTELLIGENCE FAILURE OF RAW AND CHIEF OF DEFENCE STAFF

Though the government may not display acceptance to the fact that the intelligence community miserably failed in providing adequate inputs for action, but it has come to fore that Defence Intelligence Agency, Research and Analysis Wing, National Technical Research Organisation and Special Frontier Force, all collectively failed in giving adequate inputs to the armed forces on the ground about PLA troop movement. In May 2020, more than 5000 Chinese PLA troops had carried out an exercise in hinterland of China and these troops were instantly mobilised by the Western Theatre Command (WTC) of Chinese army (that looks after India) to Tibetan Theatre Command. These troops, some 5000 of them, were unaware of the laid down protocols between India and China for border affairs. Their lack of knowledge of restraint was visible in



the 15th June 2020 Galwan Valley clash. This certainly proves that these 5000 plus troops of the PLA were not regular WTC troops and probably belonged to some other command. Some deep assets of RAW in China now confirm that there is a possibility that PLA wanted to acquaint the 'new' troops into mountain warfare and this Galwan valley incident, which went out of control, was an exposure incident. The bigger question is that why did RAW fail to provide this input about 5,000 troops coming from hinterland to the Western sector to the army? The officials of the RAW have countered the allegations by asserting that they did provide detailed human and technical intelligence to the army since February 2020 about troop built up by the PLA. If this is so and if the army was provided with adequate intelligence, then does the Galwan Valley incident prove that it is the first biggest failure of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS)? The question is that if the Research and Analysis Wing provided Defence Intelligence Agency with inputs, then why was Bihar Battalion not replaced with infantry division from Leh? As always, since Kargil, why was there no synchronisation between armed forces and intelligence? Does the buck stop at the Chief of Defence Staff for the killing of 20 Indian troops? Instead of trying to blame the opposition as "Chinese agents" and using the media with 'BJP affiliated retired army officials and diplomats' to cover up yet again a massive failure (with others being Uri, Pulwama and Pathankot), the government ought to answer these grave charges of absolute failure of national security. India needs to pay heed to the advice of Sun Tzu, *If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles.*

## **SALAMI SLICING AND CHINESE SECURITY POLICY**

An analysis of the Ladakh standoff proves that China again resorted to Salami Slicing (a term coined by Hungarian Communist Matyaas Rakosi in 1940s and in military terminology known as cabbage strategy) to make territorial grabs in the Himalayas (similar to its previous grabs of Aksai Chin, Tibet and Paracel Islands in South China Sea). Salami Slicing means a strategy of carrying out small actions in a clandestine manner that eventually accumulate into a larger action. China, to execute Salami Slicing, initiates territorial claims by staking claims to a territory. Then, carries out an intensive propaganda of all three types (in sync with Chinese Three Warfare Strategy explained previously) at all platforms (domestic and international media) to claim the territory. The propaganda by China is so intense that it positions the territory in concern as a 'dispute'. Then China uses all its diplomatic and military might to resolve the dispute by avoiding a forceful intervention. This is the larger approach of what is known as "two steps forward and one step backward".

## **CLAMOUR FOR 'BOYCOTT CHINA' (FROM HINDI-CHINA BHAI-BHAI TO HINDI-CHINI BUY-BUY TO HINDI-CHINI BYE-BYE!)**

China and India have a 77.9 BND bilateral trade and the Chinese are our second largest trading partners after the US as the first (at 83 BND). China constitutes 10.6% of our total trade (with 235 Chinese firms in India since 2003 with majority in the telecom business) but India accounts for a fraction of trade at 2.1% only. After the Galwan valley incident, a clamor to boycott Chinese goods gained momentum. Such a clamour is good for optics (to please the domestic BJP political constituents), but the harsh reality is that such a slogan, if executed, will be disastrous for India in the long run due to various reasons. Firstly, India has a very limited export to China and such a slogan will not impact China much, but harm India more as we have no substitutes. Secondly, India is dependent upon the Chinese, for a wide array of imports that range from construction equipment to electronics to fertilisers and 'Made in China' often helps in 'Make in India' too. The implications of such a clamour, on the other hand, would be serious for India and would play at multiple levels. Thirdly, if India uses the tariff and non-tariff barrier route to reduce Chinese imports, then it will not only lead to higher price of goods for the Indian consumers (who are already suffering due to income erosion caused by job losses due to COVID-19) but will also affect our domestic manufacturing competitiveness (as we import capital goods and intermediate products also from China). Fourthly, it will be very difficult for the government to entangle the Chinese investments that have entered India's start-up space that ranges from Byju's to PayTM to Ola to Zomato etc. Thus, it is imperative for the government to understand that any policy architecture at the economic level with respect to Chinese should not be driven by knee-jerk reactions but by careful cost-benefit analysis. Also, the growing clamour for banning imports could have attracted the fire of WTO and India has done well to not resort to such a tactic. This Galwan standoff should also act as an

eye opener for the government to scrutinise the bottlenecks that prevent the domestic players to undertake manufacturing. The government should push for legislations that will address such bottlenecks and strive to increase India's share in global trade as a long-term proposition.

In our discussion here, one thing is certain that a blanket ban on the Chinese imports is not feasible. However, can the tone set by Atmanirbhar Bharat and Make in India campaign lead to a mass movement where the masses individually resort to boycott any good having a Chinese component? In India, despite pesticides in Coke and neural disruptors in Maggi, mass movements have failed. Also, boycotting the Chinese goods in the age of globalisation will lead to China routing their goods from Hong Kong, Taiwan and Vietnam. In this case also, it will become difficult to trace the origin as the economies are too deeply coupled.

As India itself aspires to be a part of the global value chains, where the Chinese are already strong, banning imports from China can hurt India more than China. China will be happier to see a weak Indian economy as such a policy suits the Chinese grand strategy. Thus, India rightly resorted to the non-military option.

## INDIA'S DIGITAL STRIKE AGAINST CHINESE

Queen Victoria rightly said, "The important thing is not what they think of me, but what I think of them." Even though the clamour for a military retaliation against the Chinese grew after the Galwan valley moonlight massacre, India decided to resort to a cool head, non-military digital strike and on grounds of privacy and security, banned 59 Chinese apps in India ranging from ByteDance Tik Tok, UC Browser and Club Factory etc. (Section 69-a of the Indian IT act allows such blocking of apps if they violate the sovereignty of India, a clause used in this case). This is a live proof that India finally seems to have evolved a strategy to tackle China and it has a blend of three components, namely military, economic and diplomatic.

Sir Colonel Qiao Lang and Wang Xiangsui, two officers of the Chinese army had written a book called *Unrestricted Warfare*. The book has a chapter called "Ten thousand methods combined one". In the chapter, it is stated that the war fought beyond the battlefield is an effective war and the app ban is certainly one of the ten thousand methods we have selected to respond. This approach of India is a strong signal to the Chinese that India can respond in other ways as well and is a token of India's will to impose an economic cost on the Chinese. The action of Beijing on the app ban was predictable, but laughable. Beijing immediately asserted that India should uphold the rights of "international investors" in a legitimate manner and while calling the app ban discriminatory, it threatened India that while banning the apps, India must remember the overall interests of the bilateral Sino-Indian relationship.

While some argue that how can ban on Tik Tok be an upfront to Indian sovereignty? These critics often miss the point. The Tik Tok is owned by a firm called ByteDance. This company has a strong relationship with the Chinese intelligence. Also, as per the cyberspace laws of China, every technology company operating in China has a legal obligation to "cooperate with the intelligence agencies of the state". In February 2020, Tik Tok update their security policy and categorically stated that the data of Indians, including data related to their location, mobile browser and browsing history etc. shall be shared with law enforcement authorities of the Chinese. This is a clear example of waging a war by other means where the sovereignty of India is being challenged on every day basis.

Cutting off Chinese at the economic trade level is also not feasible because India is striving to be a globally competitive economy and knows that economic strength is only the true security because economic strength is the fuel for military strength. However, the ban on these apps may have been a short-term strategic move, but, in the long run, this will have repercussions in Chinese investments in the digital start-ups of India and will impact job creation in India and the development of the mobile hardware sector of the country. Many experts assert that India should use this space created to allow the Indian app makers to flex muscles and compete at the global level, considering the irony that no Indian app today features in top 50 globally downloaded apps but the top 50 have mostly Indian developers only. This is the time for India to demonstrate the free market trend of cyberspace and allow Indian app makers to go for a wider reach, sync with the message of 'vocal for local'. But, the app ban action is an Indian tactic from the leaf of Sun Tzu that unless certain demands are met, serious harm could be on way for the Chinese. Even though India has not banned the Huawei 5G testing in India, but it does hold the 5G levers for future in China does similar aggression. The app ban also sends a positive message to other nations in Asia and Southeast Asia, who are also peeved with the brazenness of the Chinese. The app ban has been seen positively by many Southeast Asians who believe that India standing up to Chinese bullying has given



them a sense of sigh and relief that they can too resist Chinese hegemonic assertions if needed. Through the app ban, the Chinese have rightly understood that the situation in 2020 is not what it was in 1962. Now, the contest is multidimensional and if the Chinese are going to use their economic, military and technical clout against India, then even India can respond to non-linear options to hit China where it hurts them the most. The mercantilist tendencies of Chinese have been certainly checked. After all, Sun Tzu rightly said, "It is more important to out-think your enemy, than to outfight him".

## DISENGAGEMENT TO DE-ESCALATION TO BUFFER ZONES

After intense negotiations by the two sides, finally, from July 2020, the two have initiated a process of disengagement and de-escalation. India has been very clear that disengagement is the starting point of going back to status quo ante and de-escalation is the destination. The two sides also decided to create buffer zones to prevent clashes in the Western sector. Both sides have agreed that Indo-Tibetan Border Police would man the buffer zones from the Indian side and Border Defence Regiment from the Chinese side. The rationale of using the police forces from the two sides to man the boundary is to avoid potential escalation. Also, in the buffer zones, there would be no use of carrying weapons, a job more suitable to the police, not for the army which, is trained in combat activity. While dis-engagement means going back from the forward areas to pre-established posts, this is where India favours a phased and step-wise disengagement and Chinese favour complete disengagement of frontline troops. Also, the Chinese are silent on de-escalation and for them, any de-escalation is only a shift to normalcy in the relationship. One reason why the Chinese are silent of de-escalation is because they know that they can deploy the troops at the LAC in Ladakh at a much faster pace than India. This is why India states that disengagement without de-escalation will not work. By advocating its position, India has hit the right notes. Firstly, it has lived up to the sanctity of the 1993, 1996 and 2013 agreements that assert that there should be tranquillity and peace at the LAC. Secondly, India has not hit any anti-China camp by its position, thereby asserting that it gives primacy to trust, that stands breached by unilateral behaviour of China. This is why China has been caught in a sticky situation now and wants to divert the tone of the standoff to the larger India–China relationship and seek its normalcy. But, a long and a cautious watch waits because India is not willing to oblige to it. The disengagement process has been initiated but India has adopted a new policy of "Distrust until fully and comprehensively verified". Thus, India has decided to ensure that it is not two steps forward and one step backward but two steps forward and two steps backward. It is not wrong to assert that the era of Chinese expansionism seems to be over.

## THE HEART OF INDIA'S CHINA DILEMMA

It is not difficult to understand that why did Chinese under Xi Jinping behaved the way they did in 2020 Ladakh standoff. The father of Xi was a member of the communist party and when Mao was the leader, he was charged with disloyalty and sent to harsh labour in camps. This incident seems to have cemented the idea of Xi that the only way to ensure security is to seek absolute power. And, it is rightly said, power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. In 2020, there was a lot of criticism against Chinese for their failure in tackling the spread of COVID-19, which eventually emerged as a global pandemic. In this backdrop, the veterans of the Communist Party of China called a meeting to replace Xi. This came as a surprise to Xi and he responded by unleashing YingPais, a hawkish military cum political coterie on the dissenters (the veterans). To ensure that the people do not question the 2020 purge and give Xi an opportunity to reassert himself in the era of growing opposition, Xi needed an outward projection. This is where one of the loyal generals of Xi, Zhou Zhongqi, the head of the Western Theatre Command was brought in to flare up a nationalistic cause, leading to the Ladakh standoff. This emerged as a miscalculation and a strategic blunder for Xi.

One thing is certain that China would not want an escalated full-scale war with India because that does not fit into the political and strategic roadmap of China. However, by resorting to limited scale military defeats on India leading to chunks of territorial grabs will convey the message deeply to India. In any such minor escalation, India will try to overlook minor territorial losses by asserting that it prevented larger escalation. This is precisely what Chinese aim is. They want to undertake minor territorial grabs and push India where politically, the ruling party in India, dismisses the territorial grab as a minor loss that prevented a larger escalation. This policy will tempt Beijing to repeat such tactics again and this consideration lies at the heart of India's China dilemma today. Thus, India needs to have a blend of strong political direction, coupled with mature deliberation and a coherent strategy as key elements of its new China policy. Ladakh is a part of the 'New Great

Game' where China has unleashed a war psychology officially and India needs to realise that nibbling off the territory is not the real game of China because the real game is to condition Indian mind and tie Indian hands.

## POSTSCRIPT OF LADAKH STANDOFF AND THE CHINESE 3M POLICY

China is a satiated power in Ladakh because they already have the control of Aksai Chin. Their prime driver in Ladakh assertion is to prevent India to try to change any situation on the ground by creating new infrastructures. It is important for India to differentiate between the objectives of Pakistan and China. China does not wish to alter status quo in Kashmir because its CPEC project passes through Kashmir and CPEC, a part of BRI, is a critical node of Chinese global power aspirations. However, China does not want India to make statements on altering the status quo either (as India in recent times has reiterated its old commitments of having back the control of every inch of PoK and Aksai Chin one day, something which has infuriated Chinese recently). This is where China differs from Pakistan as Pakistan aims to alter status quo in Kashmir and for Pakistan, Kashmir is a zero sum game. Thus, it is imperative for India to clearly distinguish between the objectives of Beijing and Islamabad on Kashmir and not get into the temptation of conflating the two at tactical level because doing so will make it difficult for India to adopt rational policy choices. It is important to understand that Chinese are not largely interested in occupying any Indian territory. They want to teach India a lesson for deepening ties with the US and refusing to sign the BRI. The larger message that they are trying to convey through the salami slicing with India is to force India to go for a political settlement, which shall involve India to re-orient its policies to suit the pattern of Chinese global policies (including dropping of India's stance on not joining the Chinese BRI, because Indian stance has given strength to many others to oppose China, which they frown upon). China once rightly maintained since the time of Mao that in Asia, only one sun rises (meaning, they have to keep India, a rising power and a Chinese competitor to global power status, bogged down). Xi Jinping is practicing this statement, said at the onset of the Cold War. The Chinese are guided by a policy of 3M. China today believes that they are on the path of recreating the Middle Kingdom identity again and being at the centre of the world, the Chinese think that no rules apply to them in their global and domestic behaviours as they rise on the world. The other two are Modern tools of engagement and Medieval mindset. These two mean that while the Chinese might have acquired technological prowess and might have even modernised their military with modern tools, their mindset remains medieval, which is reflected in state control of innovation, enterprise and individuals. The medieval mindset is seen in action too frequently as it partners with authoritarian regimes all over the world and use iron rods with nails, baseball bats with barbed wires in clashes and committing that it will not use weaponry to attack.

## CHINESE GEOPOLITICS, WATER, GLOBAL POWER AND TERRITORIAL DEPTH

Michael Beckley has rightly stated that when rising powers suffer economic slowdowns (which China is witnessing due to its debt-based Belt and Road Initiative and now, COVID-19), they tend to become aggressive and especially aggressive in territorial disputes to divert the attention of its people. The recent incidents at Galwan Valley and Pangong Tso have occurred with highest strategic direction from Chinese government.

The question here is why? There are various plausible reasons. The first is that Beijing is interested to reassure its camp followers that it has muscle flexing capacity after receiving bad press globally for their poor handling of their designed coronavirus. This is in larger sync with Chinese wariness of India shifting to American orbit of influence and also the argument proposed by Michael Beckley.

Secondly, the Chinese are driven with a motive to undertake maximum land grabs as possible in Ladakh because they wish to increase their depth at National Highway G-219, the highway that connects Kashgar in Xinjiang to Lhasa in Tibet because, these two Western regions of China (Xinjiang and Tibet) are Achilles Heels of China. However, the larger design is to extend their presence up to Galwan Valley and push India below Shyok River, which will enable them to have access to a huge territory, up to the Shaksgam Valley, that can give the Chinese access to abundance water (as Indus originates from Tibet and flows into Ladakh and goes to PoK) which they can use to manufacture microchips (as a 30 centimetre of a silicon wafer needs 10,000 litres of water and this is what China also wants from Pakistan, in the form of complete control of Indus). From 2018 to 2020, Chinese have imported 230 billion dollars worth microchips from the US, Japan



and Taiwan. Now, it intends to make these microchips by itself and that can be only facilitated by water from Indus and melting of glaciers in Shaksgam Valley (also proven by the fact that they had decided to sponsor construction of five major dams in PoK in 2020). Thus, water, global power status and territorial depth are the larger geopolitical strategic designs of China in Kashmir. The incidents are nothing but an attempt by the Chinese to deny respectable parity at LAC, the same way it did with India at the nuclear level in its diplomacy with the Nuclear Suppliers Group. It is time for India to end pussyfooting Chinese intimidation and checkmate China by playing the real game in the real theatre, the Indian Ocean. India needs to augment power to develop key technologies and acquire critical infrastructure. India has rightly focused on the dynamic of QUAD (a security arrangement sponsored by the US in the Indo-Pacific region), which emphasises on the democracy and security dimensions. Now, India should behave like Arjun and only focus on the eye of the fish. This is possible by only enhancing India's economic capability (to expand India's Comprehensive National Power, which today is two and a half times less than Chinese) by forming a Middle Power Coalition under the American umbrella because an ambitious rising democracy and an economically powerful India is a death knell for all rising ambitions of China, that aims to design one unipolar Asia.

## THE RISING MIDDLE KINGDOM WITH MEDIEVAL CHARACTERISTICS

The easiest argument that New Delhi South Block has always advocated is that the Indians deepening ties with the US drive the Chinese behaviour against India because China is trying to say that do not join any structure that sees our containment, else we will show you that you are a paper tiger. This argument is not always the case and one has to see the larger picture. There is another argument that Chinese have become more involved in Ladakh after India abrogated Article 370 in 2019 and made Ladakh a Union Territory and Chinese assertion that Indian action poses a threat to the sovereignty of land claimed by China. There is a belief in certain sections of India's strategic community that the chest thumping by BJP rulers of abrogation of Article 370 and unnecessary polarising statements related to Aksai Chin have been perceived by the Chinese as "continued damage to the territorial sovereignty of China by unilateral modification of a domestic law". It is ironical that these statements by the Chinese of unilateral changes by India (read Article 370 issue) come from someone that has made the South China Sea as Chinese administrative districts in the recent times. It is a pity to see that the debate on the crisis in Ladakh was being fixated on Indian constitutional changes, when in reality, it was the debate about the growing capabilities of the PLA and the political will to use the PLA against India. Chinese attempts to do assertion in Ladakh and elsewhere along the LAC will continue to grow as the military balance continues to favour China. It was for Delhi to take the larger message and build up its military power as Chinese would continue to loom larger than ever before on the entire Kashmir. This is the real message that the Chinese are affirming that it is now part of Kashmir question.

Today, Chinese are becoming more assertive in territorial gains against India because there is a shift of regional balance of power in favour of Beijing (with Philippines, Indonesia and Pakistan firmly with China). This shift in the balance of power is the driving force of all territorial assertions. They have to now be placed in the larger psychology of China. The skirmishes along the boundary with India are natural now because the CCP has been thumping its chest by asserting that 'Xi Jinping Thought' is the essence of '21st Century Marxism' and 'Socialism with Chinese Characteristics' has won over 'Western Capitalism'. The Chinese are too confident today that they can confront all powers, including India, because of their economic interdependence and political influence. The regime of Xi Jinping believes that using a combination of economic and political power, they can break and potential hostile power that might emerge as a challenge to the unstoppable Chinese. This behaviour of the CCP from their insensitivities from Himalayas to South China Sea to Indian Ocean to Belt and Road Initiative are driven by narcissism in the same way as behaviour of Imperial Japan and Imperial Germany acted prior to World War II (same behaviour was displayed by the Soviet in the 1970s when they perceived America as a declining power after their defeat in Vietnam, leading the Soviets to do social revolutions from Afghanistan to Cambodia). The tide eventually turned against Imperial Japan, Imperial Germany and Soviet Union and all the three were eventually thrown into the history's dustbin. The Chinese behaviour today thus reflects in what Thucydides stated, *The strong do what they can and weak suffer what they must*. The Chinese behaviour in Hong Kong (where Xi Jinping has abrogated the treaty of China with Britain on Hong Kong) and Taiwan (where Xi stated in 2020 that Taiwan should be incorporated with China) reflect Chinese desire for Akhand China. The border war with India revived by Xi is based on the same logic of Hong Kong and Taiwan. Xi has apparently told his population that when the Chinese were weak, the British took advantage and seized the Chinese territory of Tibet (read Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh) and incorporated

the same within India and Chinese have been asking the Indians to give them the territory back, which they have been refusing, thus, necessitating the violent action. All this is driven by a concept of nationalism that Xi has promoted in China. He has asserted that China has to regain its independent position of Middle Earth Pole in the world, the position the Chinese enjoyed in the 17th Century. Xi understands that to do so, China needs to have technological and economic prowess, which they seem to have achieved now. Thus, Chinese can be a regional and global disruptor and can even disrupt India, if it becomes a pawn in its global rise. This attitude of CCP is a grave mistake by CCP, which has neither carefully understood India's strategic resilience and nor analysed India's political culture, that produces an extraordinary degree of unity at the time of the crisis. Thus, by underestimating the 'non-cooperation' value of India, if China does not end up retreating from the illegally occupied India territories, then it should be noted that such a Chinese posture would compel India to resort to a radical reorientation of its Chinese policy, which may be detrimental to the interests of China, covertly and overtly. It is time for Chinese government to reign in their 'wolf-warrior' nationalists and cooperate and follow the dictum "he who tied the knot should untie it" because the sun may have reached its zenith.

## GLOBAL DECOUPLING OF CHINA AND STRATEGIC CHURN BY INDIA

Francis Fukuyama rightly asserts that a grand political and economic decoupling between the West and China has finally begun. The strategic turn against Chinese has begun globally. The US has initiated complete decoupling with China through three steps. Firstly, the US has ended its special status with Hong Kong. This will financially hurt the Chinese very deeply because the businesses of China use Hong Kong for all international dollar business. Secondly, the US has tightened their curbs for entry of research students above undergraduate level to the US. For many years, the Chinese have been sending their PLA officers and members of MSS (Ministry of State Security, the Chinese intelligence agency), disguised as students, to the US for research studies, with an intent to get access to deep innovative technologies. The new US visa regime is likely to create an intense level of scrutiny into the inflow of Chinese students, thereby hurting the growing technological prowess of China in future. Thirdly, the US have shown strength by withdrawing from the World Health Organization in the wake of COVID-19. This withdrawal also takes away the ecosystem of scientific research of public health and medicine that US contributes globally. The Chinese in anyway cannot replace the US at WHO, and this would make G-7 or a G-10 (with Donald Trump proposed India as a participant) meeting significant without China. Xi Jinping often disdains the advise of Deng Xiaoping that "to keep your head low and bide your time", but Xi, this time with India, in the crisis of 2020, has refused to act responsibly. The 'China Dream' and 'Catching Up', the two key slogans of Xi to position China as a power to overtake the US by 2050, seem to be slipping out of hands now. Considering that Beijing was already pre-occupied by tackling COVID-19 origin issue, backlash by the European world, trade war with Australia (where China has stopped import of Australian beef when Australia insisted on a debate on probing Chinese links to suppression of COVID-19 information) and the US, crisis in Hong Kong and Taiwan; one would not have expected the Chinese to open another front with India at this juncture. But, by opening another front with India, the Chinese have tried to give a subtle message to the US that it has the capacity to handle pressure and is not going to shy away to display power, even if it is hard power. With its recent aggression at the LAC, China has pushed India to take a stand and initiate a reset of its ties with China. The question is that when India intends to reset, would India firmly remain non-aligned in its thoughts on managing China or would it join an anti-China alliance in the future. The Indian app ban is a public signal of strategic intent of India to decouple from China. A global decoupling effort now, with India as a global partner, will definitely lead to breaking up China economically.

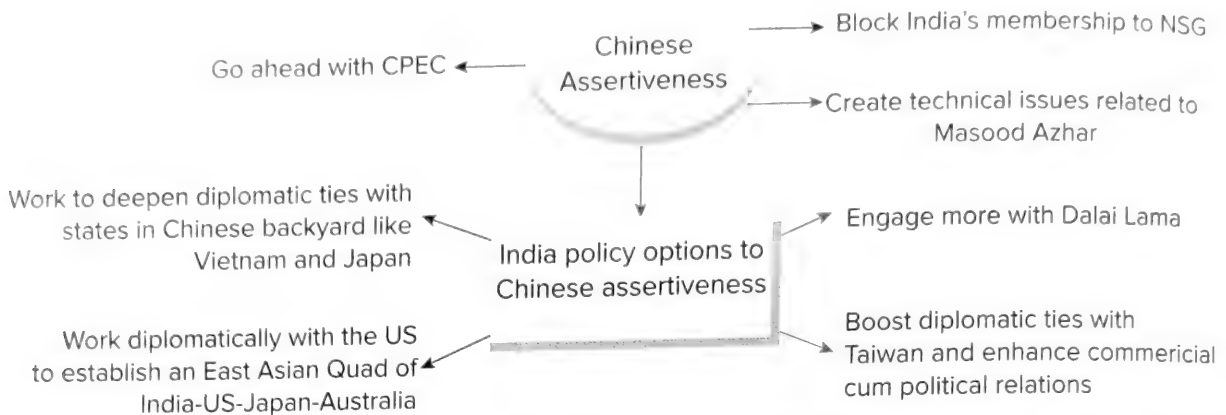
## INDIA'S TIBET POLICY AND IMPLICATIONS ON SINO-INDIA RELATIONS

India has a dual policy on Tibet. It accepts that the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) is a part of PRC. India however sides with Dalai Lama to assert that historically Tibet has been autonomous politically and culturally. Therefore, India refuses to accept Tibet as 'inalienable and integral' part of China. If Kashmir is India's Achilles heal, Tibet is the same for China.

In April 2017, the Dalai Lama visited Arunachal Pradesh. The visit drew sharp reaction from the Chinese side. China has an uncomfortable relationship with the Dalai Lama and feels that he is a separatist whose prime intention is to create unrest in Tibet to seek an autonomous state. China has always harboured a feeling that India has been supporting the Dalai Lama to create unrest in Tibet. The Indian government's policy clearly signals the diplomatic cards India can play against



China. Ironically, the Dalai Lama has visited Arunachal earlier in 1983, 1997, 2003 and 2009 as well. China has been creating a diplomatic ruckus over such visits. What has irritated China in 2017 was that during the Dalai Lama's visit to Arunachal Pradesh, India's Minister of State for Home Affairs also accompanied him to Tawang. India has insisted that the visit of the Dalai Lama is purely religious and no political meaning should be attached to the same. China, on the other hand, enquired why, if the Dalai Lama's visit were purely religious, would an Indian Minister accompany him. A deeper analysis of the visit clearly signifies that the visit of the Dalai Lama is used by India to keep China in check.

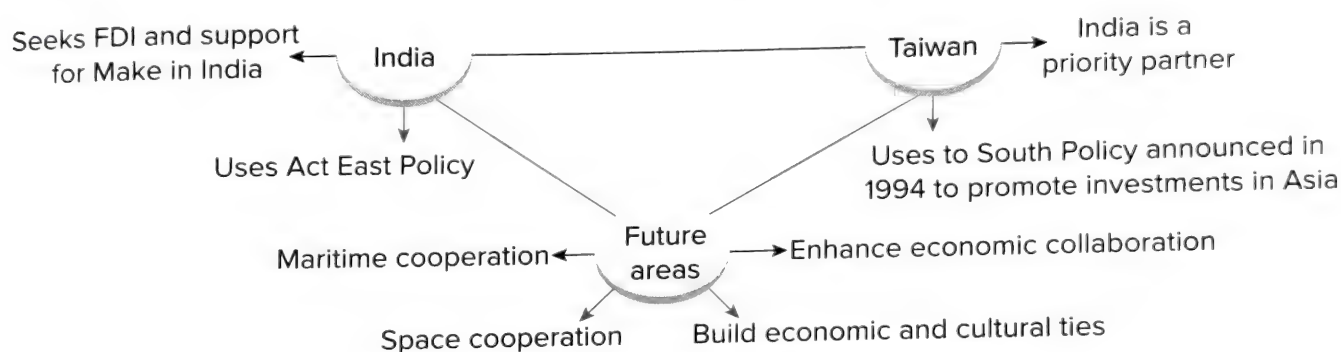


What motivates China to assert itself in Arunachal Pradesh is based in the region's history. In Tawang, there is a monastery called the Galden Namgye Lhatse. Lama Lodre Gyatso founded it in 1680 on the wishes of Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso, who was the Fifth Dalai Lama. The Tawang monastery is the seat of Karma-Kargyu sect and China knows that the Chinese legitimacy on Tibet will remain incomplete till it controls the Tawang monastery. This is the reason that China considers Tawang and Arunachal Pradesh as a part of Southern Tibet. In 2018, Dalai Lama celebrated 60th anniversary of flight to India from China. A leaked memo of the Indian government in 2018 mentioned that the government officials should stay away from commemoration event of Dalai Lama. Some in India began to say that this was an attempt by the government to 'appease China'. It is important to understand the changing reality in Tibet today. In the last two decades, China has invested tremendous resources for development of Tibet (at the cost of destroying the Tibetan environment), it has undertaken demographic re-engineering where Han Chinese are in rising. By convincing Nepal, China has clamped down the outflow of Tibetan refugees to India. Even at the cultural level, the Chinese film DVD's have replaced Bollywood. In India too, the Tibetan people living here are in a state of exile and disconnected from the developments in the Tibet. It is high time the government stops the wishful thinking that Tibetans in India are a strategic card. India needs to focus on evolving a policy to understand what the Tibetan people in India need and take required steps in the backdrop of these changing realities.

## INDIA AND THE TAIWAN CARD AND ONE CHINA PRINCIPLE

In 1949, India recognised the PRC but not the Republic of China (ROC) India believed that it was important to recognise the fact that the PRC had been established. Thus, Nehru recognised PRC and also that Formosa is Chinese territory. As neither PRC nor ROC favoured any international mediation, Nehru also designed Indian policy appropriately and maintained that the civil war of China would end soon and the will of the Chinese people would be abiding. India refrained from playing any conciliatory role in ROC-PRC issue. During the initial years, as Nehru maintained this policy, leaders of the Hindu Mahasabha, namely N. B. Khare, and Jan Sangh's Madhok, felt that India had adopted a policy of double standards by not accepting a nationalist Taiwan while accepting a communist China. Post the 1962 Sino-Indian conflict, India and Taiwan began to witness a rise in military and media exchange which today manifests as rising parliamentary exchanges. But in the last 30 years, Taiwan-China relations have improved. A unique feature is that forces have not driven this improvement from top down but from bottom up. The Taiwanese businesses have invested heavily in China and as a result, the people-to-people ties have flourished. China has remained adamant on the One-China principle and has maintained that Taiwan is part of China, as ROC does not exist anymore. It is important to understand the One-China principle. As per China, there exists only one China in the present world. China asserts that Taiwan is a part of China and the PRC is the sole legitimate representative of China. As per the One-China principle, there is complete Chinese sovereignty over Taiwan and if any

state in the world intends to undertake a diplomatic relationship with China, it needs to agree to One-China principle. Such a state is also to refrain any independent engagement with Taiwan. The One-China principle is a stabilising principle that helps China preserves the status quo over the political status of Taiwan. The One-China principle however allows Taiwan to operate as an independent administrative and economic entity. The One-China principle is different from One China Policy. The One China policy is used by the USA to assert that Chinese have claims over Taiwan, which is not recognised by the Americans. India follows One China Policy. India does engage with Taiwan, but under a different nomenclature. In 1995, India established an India–Taipei Association in Taiwan while Taiwan established the Taipei Economic and Cultural Centre (TECC) in India. The two sides don't have diplomatic relations and thus lack an institutional architecture. Today, the bilateral trade stands to be \$9 billion as of 2020. India has received FDI from Taiwan. Taiwan has, however, faced difficulties in bringing FDI to India as in the official documents of India, Taiwan is mentioned as Chinese Taipei and the existing Indian rules that apply to China also apply to Taiwan, with no exception applicable. The Continental Engineering Corporation of Taiwan has been working with the Delhi Metro. It has often complained about the repeated RBI clearance it had to get for bringing investments to India. Taiwan somehow receives less support from the Indian political elites and its foreign bureaucracy. It is important for India to rectify this imbalance and boost ties with Taiwan. Taiwan has initiated a Go South Policy in 2019 and under this policy; it intends to establish representative offices in the states of SEA for economic engagement. The Go South Policy intends to use economic diplomacy to boost political relation. The new leadership of Taiwan under Tsai Ing-wen favours deeper economic ties with India.



## THE MYTHOLOGY OF SAMUDRA MANTHAN BETWEEN INDIA AND CHINA

The Samudra Manthan is one of the most enchanting episodes in the Indian mythology. Angels and demons, as per the myth, put a mountain on a tortoise and churned the oceans by spinning the oceans with giant reptile. Today, this Indian mythology has a direct relevance for the India–China ties.

## FROM BEING INWARD TO INDO-PACIFIC RIVALRY

In the 21st century, the dragon and the elephant have started rising and their rise has altered the maritime environment of the region and the world. Initially, when the rise of modern India and China occurred, their focus remained primarily inwards. It is only after the two states began to globalise did the two realise the importance of the sea power. Because of globalisation, the two states have deepened their commercial ties with the states around them and this has resulted in the rise of a new maritime component in the psyche of the people. Because of the naval expansion, the two states are building blue water naval capabilities and projecting naval power. As they step into common waters together, the two are likely to step on toes of each other and of the US, the sole dominant power naval power in the region. The competition between the two at the naval level is immense and it requires deft diplomacy by the US in the Indo-Pacific (the new and rising geopolitical frame of future reference). Today, the two have developed a sense of rivalry with each other. At times, the two states have tried to put the rivalry at rest by asserting that the world has enough space for a peaceful rise of both; the reality is that the rising contradictions have only become irreconcilable today. Both today know that the sensitivity of the bilateral ties is more due to their relations at the global and regional level with other powers. As both engage with others, both believe that they are being encircled and this has led both to view their bilateral ties through the prism of a security



dilemma. Thus, the Sino-Indian relations are a mixture of cooperation, competition and rivalry. It is in this backdrop we will explain this maritime competition in detail.

## THE EVOLUTION AND ANALYSIS OF CONCEPT OF RESOURCE SECURITY

Since the two states have embarked growth through globalisation, the two have realised the importance to acquire minerals and resources to acquire from the outside states. This has led the two to focus on resource security for their domestic growth. As both have shifted their economy to outward globalisation, the sea power has become an important component in the strategic calculus. Consequently, the two have invested adequate resources to develop naval capabilities to protect the sea-lanes of communication. The dependence of India and China on hydrocarbons, resources and minerals from foreign states has been dubbed as vital and strategic. If China has historically followed String of Pearls and later the Belt and Road Initiative, then India too has responded from Look East Policy to Act East Policy and now Necklace of Diamond strategy.

## COASTAL DEFENCE TO BLUE WATER NAVY

The sea that was used initially by both (India and China) for coastal defence is today an arena of power projection. The first instance of power projection by India and China happened in 2008 when the UNSC authorised navies of the world to take action against Somalia pirates, not only this provided the needed legitimacy for India and China to assert power; but by sending navies for anti-piracy operations, the two decided to display tremendous maturity by positioning their navies as outward looking. This has compelled the two to develop navies that can not only safeguard the sea-lanes of communication but also carry out evacuation of their Diasporas in foreign states in the eventuality of a crisis. Today, both have ambitions to establish blue water capabilities, frigates and aircraft carriers.

Developing a blue water navy requires three things:

1. Aircraft carriers: Both India and China have adopted a mix of importing carriers to domestic indigenous manufacturing.
2. Naval cities: These are naval logistic bases for stationing, material support and international birthing of ships. They are called inshore facilities.
3. Forward offshore bases: The two need islets for intelligence and reconnaissance operations. This is being developed by India as a part of its Necklace of Diamond Strategy and China as a part of their Belt and Road Initiative.

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF INDIAN OCEAN FOR CHINA AND CHINESE STRATEGY

As China is deep outwards in the sea, the Indian Ocean is important in the Chinese strategic calculus for three reasons.

1. It is a route to supply of energy, thus it needs to protect the sea-lanes of communication. As it uses the energy for its domestic growth and this energy is transported via the Indian Ocean, which has chokepoints, it needs to have presence in the Indian Ocean to check the adversaries.
2. There are Chinese nationals in states around the Indian Ocean and most of these states are unstable (Africa and Middle East). This may require China a space to carry out covert operations to evacuate its Diaspora, thus the need for presence.
3. China has undertaken massive investments in the region around the Indian Ocean and it needs to protect them.

China is trying to provide economic and security power to the states friendly to China in the Indian Ocean. It is undertaking military and naval modernisation to enhance its power projection capabilities and is resorting to security diplomacy. China deploys its navy globally in the name of anti-piracy operations and then makes the naval presence permanent. There is a shift towards developing capabilities for open ocean protection. This means that China is trying to vie for a sea control strategy. Under this, China aims to develop capabilities where it possesses the freedom for action for its own purpose while denying action by adversary. Sea control is only for a limited period of time and in a limited area and is different from sea denial, which is long-term, permanent and oceanic.

## CHINESE GEO-ECONOMIC, GEOPOLITICAL TACTICS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN TO 'DEBT DIPLOMACY'

Firstly, China makes an offer to a state to boost the trade through investments. Secondly, China informs the state that the bilateral trade can further increase through infrastructure. This is a strategy to lure the state to seek enhancement of infrastructure. Chinese diplomats tell the government of the other state that creating infrastructure will create jobs and will help the political party or the head of the state in the long run in elections. Thirdly, this psychological strategy works and the state is induced to seek Chinese support for infrastructure. Fourthly, China uses this opportunity to create state of art Special Economic Zones and other infrastructure, thereby getting a hold on the economic possessions of the state. Fifthly, China strives to create a perception that China is a benefactor. This enables China to make provocative offers that states are unable to resist. Sixthly, when China succeeds in making massive investments and realises that the state is unable to repay the debt, China proposes to the state to make the debt an asset. This asset is then taken on lease by China for 99 years and so (reminiscent of colonial mindset) and the state falls into a debt trap.

## CHINESE 'OVERSEAS STRATEGIC SUPPORT POINTS' AND 'MILITARY OPERATIONS OTHER THAN WAR' STRATEGY

It is important to note that firstly, China lacks a coherent strategy for Indian Ocean. Secondly, China has limited capacity for operations in far off waters. Thirdly, it does not have long-range air strike capabilities. Fourthly, it lacks massive logistical support at chokepoints. China does have capability where it can respond if there are any contingencies, but it does not have massive power projection capabilities. It has succeeded in crossing the Rubicon in 2017 and ended up in establishing a naval base at Djibouti (read about it more in India and Africa chapter). India and others assert that it is a naval base but china has clarified that they are 'places and not bases' as china asserts that in Djibouti (and Gwadar and Hambantota) there are no combat capabilities, which is an essential condition for a military base. Officially, China calls them as 'Overseas Strategic Support Points' (OSSP). India says that the Chinese OSSP at Gwadar in Pakistan is an attempt by China to bog down India in Chabahar (explained in India and Iran chapter), which will ease pressure for China from the Indian Navy in the east and help in mitigating the Malacca Dilemma. The strategy of China is not sea denial but MOOTW—Military Operations Other Than War. The MOOTW includes piracy prevention and evacuation of non-combatants including Diaspora.

## INDIAN ASPIRATIONS IN INDIAN OCEAN AND INDIAN STRATEGY

India feels that it is a natural leader in the Indian Ocean and India is of the opinion that any presence of China or any other power in the Indian Ocean is extra regional and illegitimate. India feels that it is a net security provided and a regional security manager in South Asia and Indian Ocean. The problem arises when China refuses to accept this status and legitimacy of Indian claims in the Indian Ocean. China refuses to accept the Indian Ocean is India's Ocean. There is an Indian Monroe Doctrine amongst the strategic community of India. It asserts that India should establish a strong forward policy in the Indian Ocean to keep extra regional powers out of Indian Ocean, as Indian Ocean is the strategic backyard of India. However, this Indian Monroe Doctrine is only a preferred objective of Indian foreign policy and not a policy goal. Thus, as of now, India is trying to position itself as a net security provider in the Indian Ocean only.

## THE UPA GOVERNMENT'S (2004 TO 2014) INDIAN OCEAN DIPLOMACY

The concern regarding Chinese presence in the Indian Ocean was visible for the first time in 2000s. In India, a narrative was born that China is trying to enter the Indian Ocean to seek access to larger nation states. Initially, the view was that china was trying to establish capabilities for protecting the SLOC (Sea-Lanes of Communication). In 2008, when China joined the anti-piracy operations in Somalia, a new narrative was born in India. It was asserted that China is trying to encircle India and Indian scholars and diplomats came out with a 'String of Pearls' theory. The UPA government had a different strategy to meet all these narratives. The entire strategy outlined below was based on a deeper understanding that India's Comprehensive National Power is two times less than that of China, thus the strategy has to accept this reality. Firstly, the government officially refused to accept the String of Pearls theory argument. It preferred to give China the



space in Indian Ocean. In 2014, when the MH-370 Malaysian Airline plane disappeared, India did not powerfully come out to play any role in search and rescue operations, giving China primacy again. Secondly, as US–China rivalry was increasing, India asserted that in this rivalry, India should not take any sides; this is because for China, its territorial and maritime disputes are their own core issues. They are not the core issues for the US. So, India advocated that it should prefer to work with China than go against China. UPA government advocated a policy of cooperation and competition with China. The logic behind this policy was that China has legitimate interests in the protection of the SLOC and its concerns on Malacca Dilemma. So India should focus on engaging with China to explore joint protection of the SLOC in the Indian Ocean, rather than acting as an irritant. This led the UPA government to discount the idea of Indo-Pacific as it asserted that Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean are two separate strategic spaces and there is no point in conflating the two as doing so would only antagonise China. Rather, the UPA government favoured that India and China should try to establish new security architecture to mitigate competition in the seas and evolve platforms similar to ASEAN Regional Forum and East Asian Summit.

## **NDA GOVERNMENT'S (2014 ONWARDS) INDIAN OCEAN DIPLOMACY**

The NDA government brought about a radical shift in Indian Ocean diplomacy. The shift was natural due to the changed geopolitical circumstances. China had launched an ambitious Belt and Road Initiative in 2014, which had CPEC as a core irritant (both of which were perceived as expansionist by India). Secondly, China had refused to accept the verdict of the UNCLOS on South China Sea in 2016 and began to display assertiveness. This led the NDA to give high priority to the Indian Ocean. The strategy adopted by the NDA was a mixture of economic, political and military power relations in the Indian Ocean to negate the Chinese 'expansionist' approach. The logic behind the shift was based on two points. Firstly, it was believed that China through the CPEC will create massive infrastructure and this will legitimise the position of Pakistan in the disputed POK. Secondly, ASEAN and others lack aggressive power to halt Chinese expansionist behaviour. Thus, as per the new strategy, India decided to launch a new Necklace of Diamond strategy.

## **INDIA'S NECKLACE OF DIAMOND STRATEGY**

1. Under this strategy, India aims to increase the bilateral diplomatic visits to maritime states in the Indian Ocean and acquire naval birthing rights. This will be a step towards checking the chokepoints from Chinese aggression.
2. The government has encouraged Para-diplomacy. The maritime Indian states will be encouraged to directly deal with state governments in India for non-security issues like trade etc. This has given a sense of assurance to the neighbouring states that their relations with India will not be held hostage to any geopolitics.
3. Surprisingly, India has started flexing its covert muscle to ensure that regimes in the littoral states are not involved in overplaying China card. This has been visible by India using Research and Analysis Wing to bring about regime changes in Sri Lanka (2015 and 2019), Bhutan (2018) and Bangladesh (2019).
4. India has opened a strategic playground in the KTM template. The KTM template is Kenya, Tanzania and Mozambique. In these states, India is adopting a mixture of aid and military diplomacy. This approach in Africa is done with intent to provide an alternative to China in Africa. (This is explained in the chapter on Africa.)
5. India has adopted a pan oceanic capability by engaging with Indian Ocean Naval Symposium and Indian Ocean Rim Association. This is visible in the government's blue economy and Sagarmala strategy. These initiatives are based on the logic that a state that is a resident power in the Indian Ocean has a higher responsibility for peace and stability. (This is explained in details in Indian Foreign Policy Doctrines.)
6. India has realised that connectivity today is a new yardstick that is used for measuring the geopolitical influence. Thus, it has adopted a strategy of enhancing connectivity via SAARC Satellite, BCIM-EC, Asia–Africa Growth Corridor and BBIN.

## **INDIA'S STRATEGIC BIND IN THE INDO-PACIFIC AND INDIAN OCEAN**

India rightly understands that Indian Ocean as of now is second in priority for China as its first priority is Western Pacific. India favours an idea that if China is kept occupied in the Western Pacific; then India along with Japan, Australia, the US

and Vietnam can continue to project power in the Indian Ocean. This will not deter China in the Indian Ocean but can at least delay China to come to Indian Ocean. This window can be used by India to enhance its naval capabilities. Some say that India today faces a strategic bind. This is so because India disapproves China in the Indian Ocean but is unable to tell China on its face that it is unwelcome in the Indian Ocean. The only way to mitigate this bind is by ensuring that India becomes a dominant power in the Indian Ocean. For this, it would need capacity support from the US and Russia and also predominance of the US in the Indian Ocean. It needs to work with the QUAD to ensure that China does not end up in misusing the Indian Ocean and leveraging its own geographical position in the Indian Ocean. India has a military advantage over China in the Indian Ocean. If China threatens India at the land level, India may suffer; but it can always do the same harm to China (through blockade of SLOC) in the Indian Ocean. This is what gives a strategic dimension to Sino-Indian maritime relationship. Indian strategy as of now stands to be a mixture of diplomatic engagement with China and countermeasures at the strategic level through hedging against China. India has enhanced its presence in the Indian Ocean and Bay of Bengal. It has resorted to naval exercises near the Strait of Malacca, to put psychological pressure on China. There is an element of great power diplomacy by India, as visible in the Malabar exercises. The government is actively pursuing the Act East Policy to play in the backyard of China, in the same way as China plays in our neighbourhood. India knows that Chinese presence in the Indian Ocean is not a part of any Grand Strategy of China to challenge India. Its presence in the Indian Ocean is more because of commercial reasons.

## **BALANCING MODEL BETWEEN INDIA AND CHINA IN THE INDO-PACIFIC**

This is where an alternative strategy is being envisaged for the Indo-Pacific. This is based on the concept of concert of great powers, a model that was used in Europe to bring stability after the Napoleonic wars. There are experts on Indo-Pacific who argue that the region needs inclusive balancing to mitigate confrontation between India and China. They assert that there should be a concert of either the US and China or the US and Japan with India and Russia as partners. The idea of inclusive balancing favours that for Indo-Pacific, the US should cooperate with India, Japan, Russia and China. The underlying logic is that this nature of inclusive balancing will thwart any military adventurism and resist non-traditional security threats that may arise. This will ensure that the US does not contain or confront China, but strategically keeps it in check. This can be done by the US by deepening ties with India in Indian Ocean and Japan in the Western Pacific and simultaneously include China in international alliances for stabilising global politics. However, there is a view that concert system in Europe was a cathartic responsibility to systemic wars, which Asia has not seen till date. Also, the concert is successful only when it is based on shared interest and values.

## **COOPERATIVE MODEL BASED ON MULTILATERAL COOPERATION BETWEEN INDIA AND CHINA IN THE INDO-PACIFIC**

As India and China are altering the Indo-Pacific theatre through their unique geopolitics, there is a need to debate and envisage models where the two can sync in future. One of the options for India and China in the Indo-Pacific is to establish a cooperative model on basis of multilateral cooperation. India and China apparently have been quite sceptical of the use of multilateralism in diplomacy historically. Since the end of the Cold War, a multilateral grouping like ASEAN has certainly helped in changing their historical perceptions. The two have used this ASEAN formula to carve out a niche of CBMs for naval exercises. But, the two have also become suspicious of each other's presence in the Indian Ocean and Indo-Pacific. Today, both states are experimenting multilateral naval diplomacy. For instance, India is pursuing diplomatic knitting through Indian Ocean Naval Symposium, Indo-Pacific, Quad and Indian Ocean Rim Association. But, these kinds of forums are not helping in reduction of diplomatic rivalry of India and China. Secondly, Indian Ocean Naval Symposium and Indian Ocean Rim Association, ASEAN Regional Forum and MILAN etc. have also not helped in reduction of stray instances of assertion in the South China Sea. Thus, any kind of a cooperative model on basis of multilateral cooperation will have to envisage elements of establishing a good order in the sea.

## **CHINA AS AN AUTISTIC SUPERPOWER AND A STRATEGIC TRIANGLE**

All these strategies have only increased the concerns about China in the neighbouring states. China has taken no steps to reduce tensions through clarifications. All this proves that China is an autistic superpower. It suffers from a neurological



condition where it is absorbed and happy in its own delusions and day dreaming fantasies. It has scant regard for understanding the emotional state of other states around it. The Sino-Indian relationship in the Indo-Pacific will largely depend upon the policies of the US. Though the US has remained a dominant power since the end of the World War II, the rise of China and India is going to affect the American power as the two are going to re-write the maritime power rules. This is where a possibility of a new strategic triangle emerges. The concept of strategic triangle asserts that a policy of one state in the strategic triangle will have an impact on the policies of the other two states in the strategic triangle. This is clearly visible in the Indo-Pacific. As China has started rising economically, its naval outreach manifests in its two-ocean strategy. As a part of this strategy, China has expanded its footprint in the Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean. Though, as of now its strategy in the Indian Ocean is highly economic in nature, but this will manifest later deeply to reshape regional geopolitical dynamics. China aims to establish eighteen-pearls in Indian Ocean. China has adopted a strategy where it uses its economic diplomacy to create a favourable geopolitical condition for the states in the Indian Ocean that are favourably inclined to adopt a pro-China position. It is done through a well-established strategy outlined above. It is a truth that the power that commands the sea is a world power and any change in the world power is based on change in sea power also. The future of relations will depend upon the changing power equations in Indian Ocean.

## CHINA–PAKISTAN AXIS AND ITS IMPACT ON INDIA

China and Pakistan's friendship has proved an all-weather friendship over time. In fact, despite the distinctive ideologies of both states during the Cold War, China followed Kautilya's Mandala theory (your immediate neighbour is your enemy but the neighbour's neighbour is your friend) with Pakistan. China has clarified that the Sino-India relations have nothing to do with Sino-Pak relations. However, India remains deeply concerned about Chinese supply of arms to Pakistan. China says its arms sale to Pakistan is based on an economic logic to make profit and is not meant to act against India and has reiterated that it is even willing to sell military equipment to India if needed. India, on the other hand, feels that China is arming nations around India to bring Pakistan on a strategic parity with India and maintains that Chinese weapons are used by Pakistan against India. India continues to feel that the Sino-Pakistan arms trade would impact the regional balance but China insists it would not. China has three interests in Pakistan. Firstly, there is a mutuality of Pakistan and China with respect to undercutting India. Secondly, it is the prevention of radical Islam from Afghanistan and Pakistan into the Xinjiang province of China to create a stir amongst the Uyghur Muslims. Thirdly, Pakistan is a gateway for China to Afghanistan and the Middle East. For Pakistan, China fits into the concept of borrowed power, to undercut India. China also serves the interests of Pakistan, be it regionally constraining India or globally vetoing decisions that are harmful to Pakistan like blocking India at the Nuclear Suppliers Group membership. Despite Kashmir and Tibet as core concerns between India and China, China has prevented India to achieve primacy in South Asia. Its engagement with Pakistan is to prevent 'hegemony of India' in South Asia. China has built nuclear level relations with Pakistan. Doing so has ensured that India remains bogged down to tackle Pakistan and its nuclear programme while it enjoys the space to project power without hindrance. Even though China joined the NPT in 1992, it exercised the 'grandfathering' clause to support Pakistan for its civilian nuclear programme and its missile development. This continues till today.

For China, Pakistan is

- A balancer to India
- A geopolitical bridge to the Middle East
- A champion of Sunni Islam
- A base for China to project power in the inner Asia
- A territory to prevent Chinese Malacca Dilemma
- An intelligence playground to prevent radicalisation of Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang

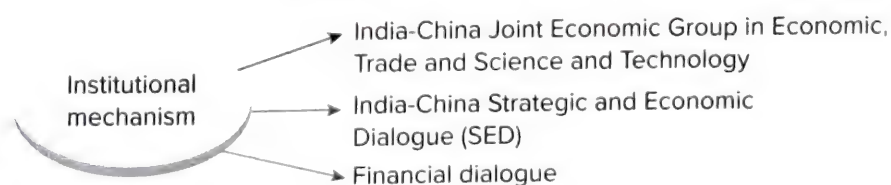
## INDIA AND CHINA AND NUCLEAR DIPLOMACY

After the Sino-India conflict in 1962, the globe witnessed Cuban missile crisis and to diffuse the global tensions came the Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT) in 1963. India signed the PTBT thinking it would help the diplomatic posturing of India in the context of a long-term disarmament policy but China refused its ratification. In 1964, China tested nuclear weapons

and opened the nuclear dimension in security confrontation with India. India subsequently tested its PNE in 1974 but still shied away from developing further nuclear weapons. In 1998, India finally conducted nuclear tests and crossed the Rubicon to become a nuclear weapon state. The rationale forwarded by Vajpayee was Chinese threat and its clandestine support to nuclearise Pakistan. India effectively stated that the Chinese threat was the reason for India to go nuclear even when China, in contrast, had not resorted to citing the India threat as a reason for its own nuclear weapons programme. To understand the issue better, we need to revisit the Cold War. During the Cold War, what compelled China to go nuclear were the US and the Soviet Union having weapons. At any point of time even during that period, China never hinted it would use nuclear weapons against India. India, in contrast, believed that China could use the threat of nuclear weapons to coerce India and it is the nuclear weapon that had given China an international status that it may use to undermine India's attempt to increase its prestige amongst Asia and elsewhere. China further clarified that its nuclear weapon status is based on minimum creditable deterrence and also announced its 'No First Use' policy, thus nullifying the threat that India had envisaged. China went nuclear in 1964 but joined the IAEA in 1985. In this two-decade period, the media did prop up the issue of China proliferating to Pakistan. After China joined the IAEA in 1985 and the CTBT in 1996, it became an advocate and supporter of non-proliferation. However, the world is suspicious about China's claims due to its activities from 1964 to 1985 with respect to Pakistan, Iran and North Korea. Though China has accepted military ties with Pakistan, it has maintained that it has not given any ballistic missile capabilities carrying nuclear weapon to Pakistan. Despite Chinese refusal to accept that Pakistan had received nuclear weapon assistance from China, the international society continues to hold China responsible for proliferation to Pakistan. India has perceived all Chinese support to Pakistan at the military level, especially at the nuclear weapon level, as part of a strategy particularly designed to contain India. It is noteworthy, however, that China was merely one of the many important factors, not least of which was India's ambition to position itself as a great power and its domestic political compulsions. However, China took the Pokhran-II as part of an anti-China rhetoric. In fact, Vajpayee's letter to Clinton accentuated the Chinese threat theory as Vajpayee had clearly mentioned that what compelled India to conduct a nuclear test was the fact that it shared its borders with a nuclear weapon state that had indulged in aggression against India in 1962. Though China was not directly mentioned, it was a fairly unambiguous insinuation. Many in China had believed that India had a right to conduct a nuclear weapon test and there could have otherwise been no reason for China to oppose it until India's 'China threat' theory came to light. Consequently, officially China strongly condemned India's Pokhran-II and declared that India had resorted to immaturely blaming China for its urge to go nuclear. China said that it was never a threat to India as it had stated that it would never use nuclear weapon against non-nuclear weapon states. China also stated that India wanted to establish dominance over South Asia and its nuclear weapon test was a gesture to that effect. Thus, the Chinese threat theory became a major irritant in the relations as China clarified that a pre-requisite for a healthy relationship was an absence of fear from each other. However, after Pokhran-II, India did take steps to revive talks with China. India committed that dialogue was the only way out and even invited China to revive dialogues. An Indo-China Eminent Persons Group was established. Because India too has announced a 'no first use' policy, there is a high possibility that there will never be a nuclear conflict between India and China. However, China continues to be reluctant to accept India as a nuclear weapons state as it does not want India to emerge as a great power in its own neighbourhood. China observes that granting the status of a nuclear weapon state to India would jeopardise the international community's efforts for non-proliferation as it would be tantamount to admitting India's entry in the global nuclear order despite it being a non-signatory to the NPT and the CTBT. Even today, China is confident of its nuclear superiority over India and is concerned with a rise of Indo-US cooperation because of the possibility of the US using India as a hedge against China.

## INDIA AND CHINA COMMERCIAL DIPLOMACY

In order to promote trade, there are various institutional mechanisms available.





It was in 2005 when a pact was concluded and the financial dialogue was launched. The dialogue allows the two states to explore dimensions of commercial cooperation. India exports cotton yarn, copper, petro products and iron ore while importing telecom equipment, hardware, and industrial machines. Various Indian banks have presence in China while Indian firms such as Tata, Binani cements, Bharat Forge, TCS and NIIT, and so on, are present in China. Indian firms are primarily in IT, pharmacy, refractors and laminated tubes industry. The Strategic and Economic Dialogue is a mechanism for macroeconomic and strategic issues of cooperation, with infrastructure, energy, environment, high technology, railways and power generation being core areas of interest. India is an importer of Chinese goods but there is a trade imbalance as our imports from China are more than the exports. India has an edge in pharmacy, agro-bovine meat industry and textiles industry. India is seeking better market access to rework the trade imbalance. Chinese FDI to India is very less, and is surprisingly lower than the FDI India receives from Poland and Canada. It is not that the Chinese are not interested to invest in FDI in India. However, the Chinese investments are more in resource-rich areas of Africa and Central Asia, in oil and gas sectors, to fuel Chinese domestic growth. As India too is an energy importer, there is less possibility that Chinese FDI will rise in India in the near future. China does complain about red tape and delays in security clearances in India for Chinese projects while India complains that China gives preferences to its state undertakings, restricting Indian corporates' market access. We should not be overtly fixated with trade imbalance with China as India has a trade deficit with 16 out of top 25 trade partners. Because of a weak manufacturing sector, India is unable to produce goods to meet domestic demand and ends up importing heavily. Though India has a trade deficit with China roughly ranging from 54% to 56% its deficit is 90–91% with Iraq and 82–82% with Switzerland. Today, Chinese need India for 5G technologies, as it is a big market for 5G. The 5G technologies are the leverage with India and India has conveyed to China to address concerns that Indian players have while accessing Chinese markets as a quid-pro-quo.

## THE QUANDARY OVER CHINESE 5G: KISS OF DEATH

The concept of 5G technologies produced by Chinese and pioneered by the Huawei, has to be seen in the larger strategy of Chinese four heavens. The four heavens include the BRI, Digital Silk Route of China, Made in China 2025 and Chinese Standards 2035. The 5G of Chinese are the mother lobe, coupled with AI, will give China the access of global data. This data will be used by 2025 to create products that the Chinese will manufacture under the Made in China 2025 and standardise under the Chinese Standards 2035 for global level dumping, making China the centre of earth in 2049. The 5G is the enabler, the trunk of the infrastructural cake, which, at its base has the BRI, Digital Silk Route of China and at the top, as icing has Made in China 2025 and Chinese Standards 2035. Thus, if Chinese progress with 5G, it will strengthen the cake and make China stronger. But, if the 5G is resisted by the world, then it will put an end to the economic and strategic dominance of Chinese at the global level and cause internal strife and disintegration of the Chinese state because it will degrade the social contract of "better life for Chinese people" that its government has been propagating. The world is already doing its bit to tackle the dominance of the Chinese in 5G. While the US and the UK have decided to look for players outside China for the 5G equipment, the Vietnamese have developed their own version of 5G. The Japanese and the EU are investing domestically to develop their own 5G technologies. This leaves the Chinese with the largest 5G markets in India. The Chinese will do everything in their might, from resorting to skirmishes on the border (Ladakh standoff 2020), to resorting to drone attacks on Indian oil installations in the western side of our country, to misusing the Chinese apps to gather data (for Made in China 2025 and Chinese Standards 2035 as explained previously) to cyber attacks on India. If India adopts a tough nose on 5G, the Indian telecom sector will be under stress to buy non-Chinese equipment from the EU. The signing of India–EU FTA can lubricate the process for the Indian telecom players. The creation of D10 club is being floated to channelise global expertise on 5G sharing and this D10 already excludes the Chinese. Thus, if India resorts to banning 5G, could India be able to contribute to the birth of rule of law and democracy in China?

## US–CHINA TRADE WAR AND IMPLICATIONS ON TRADE RELATIONS WITH INDIA

Since the end of the Cold War, China and the US had a relationship called as 'neither friends nor foes'. This was a model of 'win-win economic engagement' or better known as 'cooperating rivals'. This situation changed after 2008 crisis as the crisis ended up in narrowing the economic gap between the two (in 2012, the US economy was two times bigger than

China, from four times in 2007). This has caused enormous differences in the perceptions. The Americans are anxious about the way the Chinese are flexing their economic (through BRI) and military muscle. The Chinese feel that Americans are a hurdle in the rightful place of China in the world order and does not prefer the world to be unipolar, probably what Americans want. Thus, the trade war is not just about trade centric issues but also, about global hegemony. Over the years, the US companies have taken the advantage of low costs of manufacturing in China. Most of these firms began to depend upon China for their needs of the supply chain. In fact, 50% of supplies of Apple, Dell, and IBM etc. come from China. Seeing the trade war, most of the firms have decided to de-risk their operations and supply chains. This is where India enters. The India and the US are 'natural allies' with a shared vision of democracy. As part of de-risking operations, the US firms have decided to switch over their supply chain requirements from India. But it is not going to be easy for India to replace China in the global supply chains. China has a tremendous infrastructure which India lacks. However, India can always leverage its position in automobiles and textiles apart from ICT. The government in India has to massively invest in not just low cost manufacturing but low cost logistics, which will enable the players to manufacture and export immediately. This is where India can leverage its unique position in the Indian Ocean as well. As the US keeps de-risking operations in the long run, India needs to use the situation to take a leap faith in its manufacturing.

## **BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE AND THE CHINESE ASHWAMEDHA—THE INFLUENCE OF MYTHOLOGY**

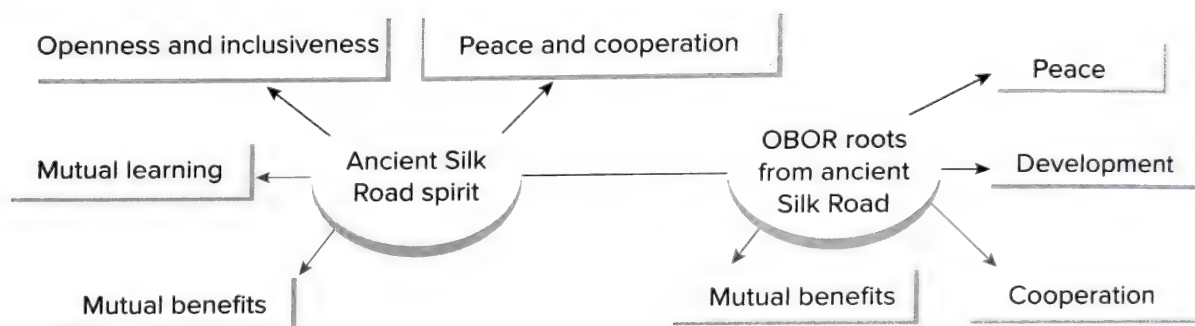
As Western hegemony wanes in the global village, China envisioned the One Belt, One Road (OBOR) project. At the heart of Chinese mythology is belief in the Mandate of Heaven. The Emperor of China has been given the divine authority to mirror heavenly order on earth. If the emperor fails to do so, he can be replaced. A successful revolution marks the shifting of this mandate from one king to another. Although communism sees itself as rational, and so anti-religion and anti-mythology, the communist revolution under Mao Zedong effectively marked the shift in the Mandate of Heaven from the old order to the new. The rise of China into an economic powerhouse under Deng Xiaoping also indicates yet another shift in the Mandate of Heaven. The current leadership of Xi Jinping in China is now expanding its Pax Sinica. Geography always plays a key role in Chinese mythology. At the centre is the Forbidden City (Beijing) around which is China and around which are the peripheral nations who look towards China for guidance to create heavenly order on earth. Beyond are the lands of chaos, whose people are best, kept out using projects such as the Great Wall of China. By contrast, time (kala) plays a key role in Hindu mythology. Buddhism, Jainism and Hinduism speak of a world that has no beginning (anadi), no end (ananta) and is always impermanent (anitya). Indian mythologies speak of great universal emperors (chakravartin) but these are more conceptual than historical. India thrives in dynamic diversity, with multiple kingdoms that rise and fall from Mauryas to Guptas to Vakatakas to Rashtrakutas to Kadambas to Gangas to Pallavas to Pandyas to Cholas to Nayakas to Mughals to British. There is no Beijing equivalent in Hindu mythology, though Delhi is often projected as such in post-Independence textbooks. India, known in Buddhist, Jain and Hindu texts as Jambudvīpa or Bharata-varsha or Arya-varta, is bound not by politics but by religion; it has been united not by empires but by pilgrim routes, an idea that perplexes modern historians who try very hard to prove India is a creation of the British. In Chinese mythology, there is authority and bureaucracy in heaven too. The gods enable the living to be successful, and successful mortals such as emperors, military commanders and noblemen take the position of immortal gods. The highly formal, hierarchical and socially responsible Confucianism, with its great regard for authority, is balanced by the more mystical and occult Taoism, that speaks of harmony and flow. Essentially, the tone is highly materialistic and worldly in contrast to the otherworldly nature of Indian mythologies, where the psychological matters more than the physical. Jain, Buddhist and Hindu mythologies place great value on yoga, the un-crumpling of the mind crumpled by hunger and fear. In Chinese worldview, India is seen in two ways. Firstly, it embodies luan, chaos. This chaos threatens the Chinese sense of order. This makes India a perpetual threat. It makes the Chinese leadership nervous. Secondly, India is Sukhavati, the Western Paradise in Chinese Buddhism, source of great spiritual wisdom. It speaks about transcending materialism to be free of suffering, an idea that invalidates the promise of the material philosophies, be it communism or capitalism. Until the arrival of the Europeans, Buddhism was the only foreign idea that has had a dramatic impact on Chinese history. Since then, China watches with trepidation the rising tide of Christian evangelism in South Korea and Singapore, and Islam on its Western borders, and the hurricane of technology coming from the West. The Chinese way is eroding, unless the Emperor takes



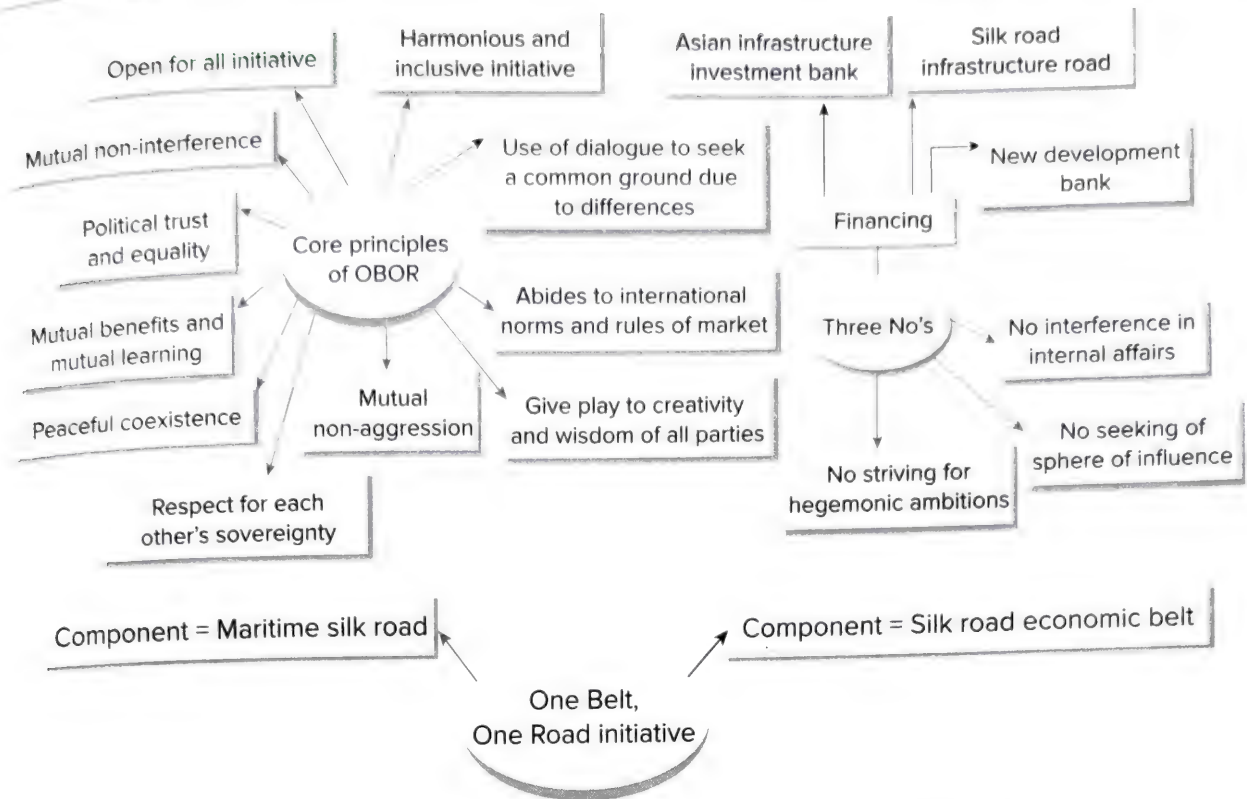
charge. Hence, Chinese heavenly emperor announced the Belt and Road Initiative. However, it is often stated that natural catastrophes are likely to be the sole causes for the end of Mandate of Heaven.

## THE CONCEPTUAL DETAILS OF BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE

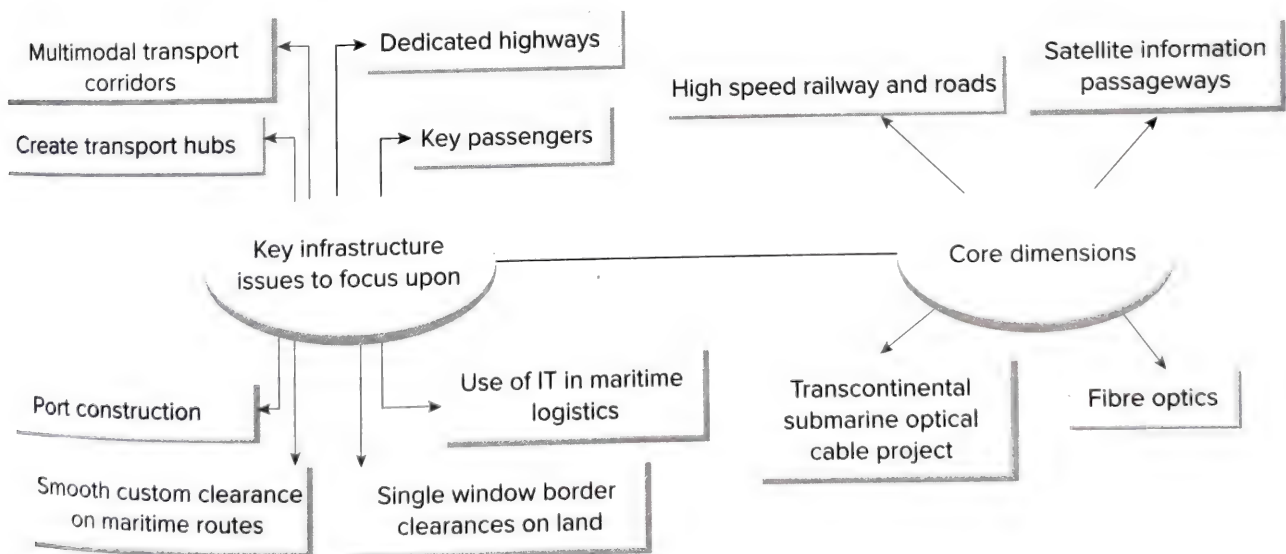
China was initially a communist country and a closed economy. In 1978, China made a transition to open economy. This happened because in the 1970s, Chinese began to witness problems in leadership of Soviet. This crack in the leadership with Soviet was exploited by the US and in 1972, the US transformed their ties with the Chinese. In 1978, Deng Xiaoping adopted the 'Going Out' strategy and Chinese advanced to become an open economy. In 40 years, China transformed itself from an agricultural economy to the manufacturing powerhouse of the world. It has followed a unique model of producing commodities at home and exporting the commodities to developed global markets. However, the Chinese economy, in recent times, has witnessed a slowdown in growth, which has led the Chinese government to look for new avenues of growth within its developing neighbours who are witnessing a growing demand. The aim of the BRI project is to create an economic land belt and a maritime link to redirect Chinese capital to develop infrastructure and trade capacity of ASEAN, Europe, Central Asia, Europe and Africa. The idea of the Silk Road has been taken from the old Silk Road built by the Han Dynasty, connecting Xian to the Roman Empire. In this mega trade network, the Chinese used to trade in silk, which inspired the German geographer named Ferdinand von Richthofentoco in the term, 'Silk Road' in the 19th century. Now, as China has achieved global resurgence, we see the revival of the ancient Silk Road in the 21st century in the form of BRI.



The concept of the BRI is based on certain principles where the broad aim is to establish a multi-dimensional and multi-tiered connectivity to tap the market potential of the region's leading countries to aggressively undertake job creation and promotion of consumption. The more important thing is that the BRI has a very strong cultural agenda to enhance people-to-people contacts, trust and understanding to promote harmony, peace and prosperity. Not only does the BRI rest upon mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs, but also respect for the diverse development path adopted by a participating nation without any intention to change it. China does not want the initiative to be restricted to old Silk Road nations but rather proposes a global outreach for all to participate, as the basis of the Silk Road is to garner and channelise the market forces of demand and supply. China has a plan to involve more than 60 countries in the project and also plans to negotiate Free Trade Agreement with all of them along the entire BRI. Some studies done by the Asian Development Bank suggests that China would require around 8 trillion dollars' worth of investment for creating the needed infrastructure. China has created three financial institutions to support the BRI. In February 2014, China launched a 40-billion-dollar silk-road infrastructure fund, to be managed on the lines of China's sovereign wealth fund. In October 2014, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank was established as a global developmental bank for 21 Asian Nations, ranging from India to Laos to Oman to Uzbekistan, with a registered capital of 100 billion dollars. In July 2014, with a seed capital of 50 billion dollars, a new development bank was launched by BRICS nations.

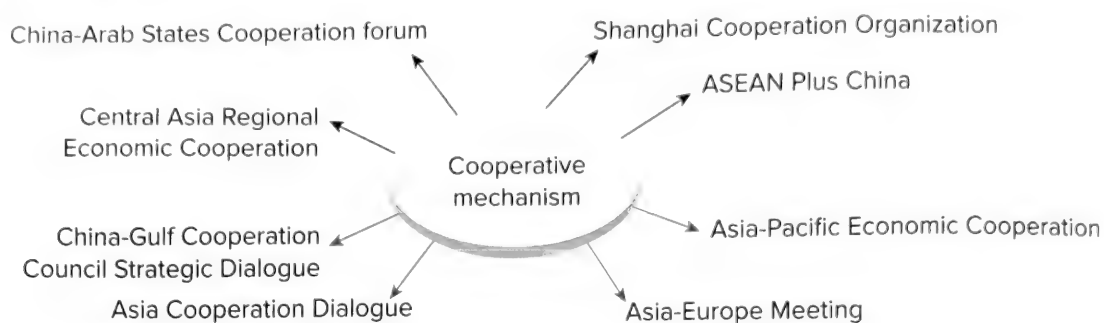


The BRI is designed in a way that it will also impact the domestic economy of China. China today has achieved an overcapacity in steel, cement and aluminium industry and would like to undertake exports to further stimulate its domestic economy. To do so, China has divided its domestic territory into five different regions. In each identified region, China will build infrastructure and use that infrastructure to establish connect with countries in the neighbourhood. For the BRI to succeed, China has decided to cooperate upon some core priority areas with participating states. At an initial level, China envisages policy coordination to be undertaken through multi-level intergovernmental macro policy exchange and communication mechanisms. The second priority is to strengthen sub regional and border infrastructure, with a strong focus on promoting a green and low carbon infrastructure creation.





At the soft policy level, China intends to use BRI to connect to people of different nations through scholar exchanges, tourism, films, cultural years, art festivals, TV programmes, and so on. Another core dimension is health-based cooperation where the aim is to collaborate to address public health energies, with expanded cooperation in the idea of traditional medicine. There is also renewed emphasis upon youth employment, entrepreneurship training and skill development to accelerate regional and multilateral integration under which various cooperative mechanisms are to be used.



China has identified the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and Bangladesh–China–India–Myanmar (BCIM-EC) economic corridor as key initiatives broadly associated with BRI.

The BRI of China is nothing but a Chinese territorial fetishism. Surprisingly, Chinese territorial fetishism is not new and it is rooted in history, stemming not only from colonial incursions but also nomadic invaders who plundered the rich Yellow River Valley civilisation and ruled over China for almost half of the period of Chinese imperial history. To overcome peripheral vulnerability, the imperial Chinese state devised a well-defined periphery policy, the core of which was defence through development and forced migration. The post-1949 Hanisation of Tibet and Xinjiang is therefore, a mere validation of imperial policy. Similarly, in the 1990s, to address the menace of ethnic separatism in the backward peripheral regions of Tibet and Xinjiang, China undertook the Western Development Strategy that was again laced with security measures, not economic amelioration, underscored in the five-pronged security policy of Hanisation, infrastructure development, resource extraction, military deployment and repression.

## **BRI AND INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY: BRAVE AND PRINCIPLED STAND**

India has raised multiple objections to the BRI. India says the BRI is not a treaty-based concept and it does not conceptualise its rules and strategy at the outset. A core principle of the Indian foreign policy is its reluctance to accept anything that is not treaty based. Lack of a treaty specific commitment, coupled with an absence of mutual trust between India and China has compounded the problem. This has led India to call the BRI a 'national Chinese initiative'. India asserts that the BRI is not a true international initiative because had it been one, then, it would have conflated interests of all players. But, BRI is purely China centric.

## **BRI AND INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY: CHALLENGING THE AMBITION**

India has a second objection to the CPEC, the core component of the BRI. The CPEC passes through disputed area of Jammu and Kashmir, the Pakistan Occupied Kashmir, claimed by India. Many initiatives of the CPEC are financed by the AIIB. The charter of AIIB very clearly asserts that if AIIB finances any projects in a disputed territory, it should seek a consensus of disputant states. India has asserted that China has not done this. This has given India the needed ammunition to eventually question that what exactly is the ambition of China and its core motives behind the CPEC and BRI? The investment in the disputed area only legitimises the illegal occupation of Pakistan.

## **BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE (BRI) AND INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY: INDIA'S CONNECTIVITY DIPLOMACY TEMPLATE**

India says that the key issue of BRI is the concept of connectivity envisaged by China. At this place, India has distinguished between connectivity projects that are unilaterally decided and one that is established via consultation. India has always

supported consultative connectivity projects, which defuse rivalries at national level, in contrast to ones unilaterally decided, that often adds to regional tensions and create unnecessary element of competitiveness. For India, if multi-polar world is the world of the 21st century, then multi-polar Asia is a passport to this multi-polar world. India has linked the creation of multi-polar Asia that is based on the system of consultations for benefit of all rather than unilateralism and for the benefit of one.

## INDIA ON CHINESE PERCEPTION OF SOVEREIGNTY

India has asserted that Kashmir is an integral part of India, which is partly illegally occupied by Pakistan. Any initiative in a disputed territory affects sovereignty of India. India has asserted that as China is sensitive towards its own sovereignty, it needs to display the same sensitivity towards India too. All the above points clearly assert that the Chinese conceptualisation of BRI is contrary to Indian perception of any multilateral project. India per se does not have any problem with BRI.

## PHILOSOPHY OF INDIA'S APPROACH FOR BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE

Any project that entails massive investment in a disputed area (like POK through which CPEC passes) will only legitimise the illegal occupation of the territory by Pakistan. Also, India feels that Chinese maritime forays in Myanmar, Bangladesh, Maldives, Sri Lanka and Pakistan and its port creations in these states will give china an upper edge in the Indian Ocean, denying India options to play in Indian Ocean, which it considers its own backyard. India feels that due to ports created in the states above, china will cause massive dumping of goods and saturate their markets, which will put India in a tough situation where it will be left with only little scope for exports. This means, India feels that CPEC affects India's economic diplomacy. India feels that as BRI will give a competitive edge to Chinese corporations to do easy business in states around India and it would reduce the participative space for Indian corporate to leverage these markets. India has analysed that the objective of the BRI is to export the top-down, debt-driven Chinese development through government-to-government deals that are devoid of an element of competitive bidding. Thus, India's policy can be best termed as a muted response with unaddressed concerns.

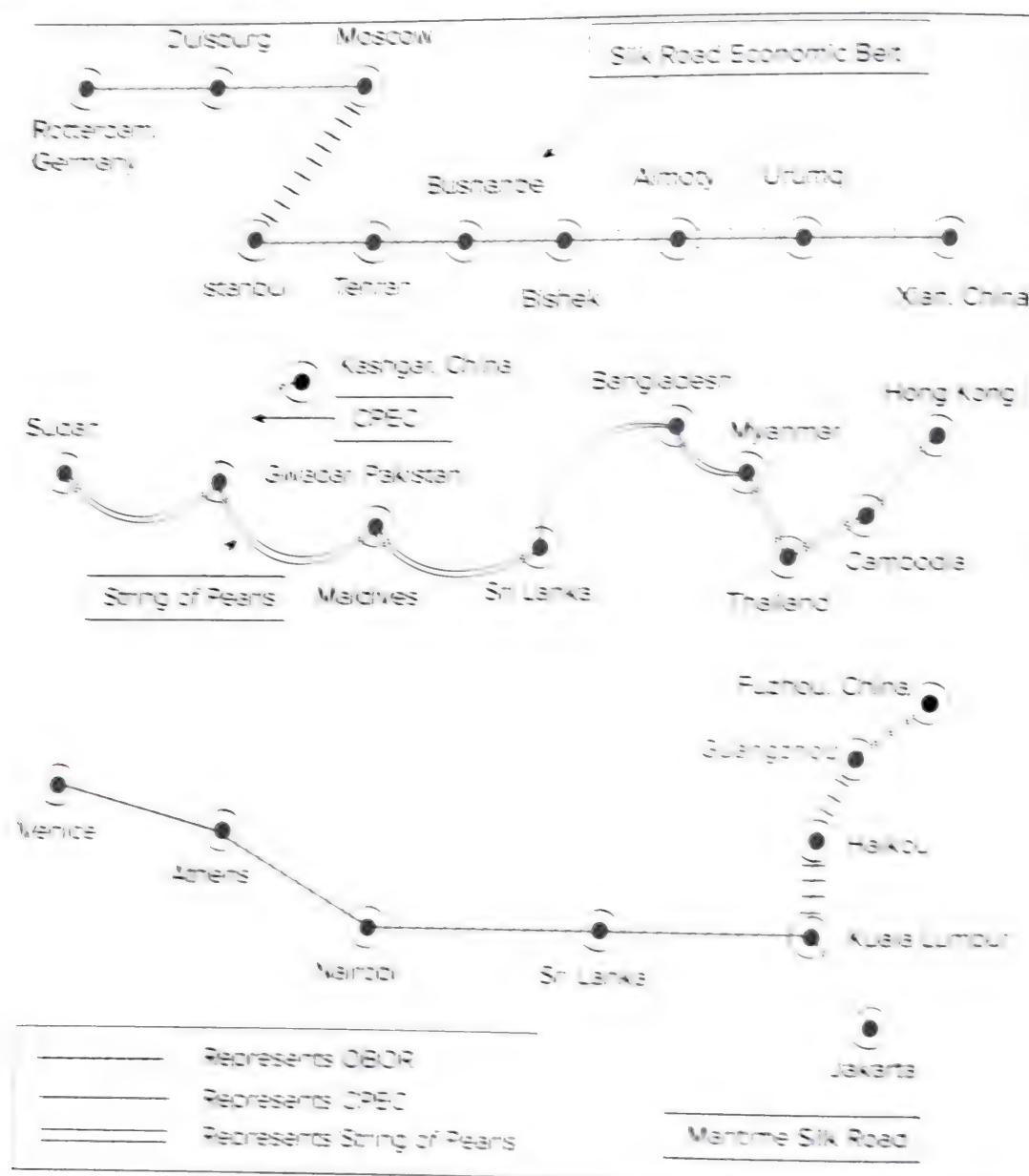
## INDIA'S PERCEPTION: BELT AND ROGUE INITIATIVE

As a strategy, China is using BRI to export its excess capacity, which will expand the Chinese market base and consequently its political clout. During the time of Mao, China initiated 'Red and Expert' initiative. This was an initiative where Red signified the communist China and Expert signified the technical and economic expertise. The Red and Expert initiative aimed to perfectly blend the politics, economics and technology for the benefit and growth of China. Few years later, Mao initiated the Cultural Revolution, where politics (Red) took over economics and technology (Expert), leading to a disaster. This is where the genesis of the BRI lies. After the death of Mao, Deng Xiaoping took all efforts to bring Chinese intellectual power to the forefront. As Chinese economy grew, Xi Jinping brought about the BRI. The backdrop of its launch was the Chinese assertiveness in the South China Sea and a constitutional order that removed presidential term limits for the Chinese Premier. In 2020, six years after the launch of BRI (2014), states are cancelling the projects of BRI. This raises questions on the legitimacy of the strategy of China. It is in this backdrop that India is proud to emerge as a leader of the new intellectual movement unleashed against the financial and security risks associated with this rouge initiative. India has rightly stated that BRI is a non-transparent and a neo-colonial enterprise of China. The prime objective of the BRI is to use cash-strapped states as targets and engulf them in a debt trap, thereby helping China to advance its geopolitical interests. The BRI clearly signifies the rise of a 'new imperialist China' and is 'reminiscent of European colonialism' (practices being followed by China like leasing for 99 years and so). The IMF too has advised caution to the states with respect to the 'predatory' practices of debt traps by China that can seriously undermine the national sovereignty and self-respect of the states. The case of China taking over Hambantota port for lease of 99 years is reminiscent of a farmer in debt handing over his daughter to the cruel moneylender. The same strategy was applied by China in Djibouti, where the debt and cash strapped state had no other option but give away the land on lease to China for a military base. All this proves that BRI is a geo-economic tool to promote geo-political objectives of China. The BRI is a strategy to remake the terms of global commerce on the terms dictated by China.



## SHOULD INDIA JOIN THE BRI? REVERSING THE PRISM

It is imperative for India to join the BRI as India may accrue strategic and economic benefits of the same and also because joining BRI makes historical sense as Kautilya has often emphasised that to decapitate a rival, hug him tight. Various studies have pointed out that CPEC component of BRI have witnessed bottlenecks and the CPEC is no more a river of milk and honey, but rather a millstone around the neck. The issues in CPEC range from opposition to infrastructure by Baluch people to that of the US-Pakistan rapprochement. This is where India can take advantage and offer China with Kandla to Kashgar connectivity. If China aims to develop Kashgar to Gwadar as part of CPEC, then India can offer this alternative space as a sweet revenge to Pakistan. Establishing a strategic corridor from Kandla to Kashgar will also weaken the bargaining power of Pakistan with China and enhance India's bargaining power with China. While rejecting the BRI, India has stated that connectivity projects should follow principles of financial responsibility and ensure that projects do not create unsustainable debt burden for communities. This is the place for India to act smart and use the BRI to internationalise these principles. This would also contribute to India position itself as a leading power. Thus, India should join the BRI for the strategic and economic sense it makes.



## CONTEXT OF THE INFORMAL RENDEZVOUS OF WUHAN AND CHENNAI

Both China and the US see India as a swing state. This means that the US wants India to swing in favour of Washington in their grand strategy to counter China; while China does not want India to swing in favour of Washington to counter China: thus, the need for informal summits. The Indian Prime Minister and the Chinese Premier had an informal summit at Wuhan (a city in the mid of Yangtze is a symbol of economic might and resilience of China) in 2018 and Chennai in 2019. Informal summits do not have any pre-decided agenda for discussion and at the end of such summits there is no formal statement, no MoU announced and no joint press conference occurs. The only problem with an informal summit is that parties are not bound by their words. The advantage of an informal summit however is that it allows a relaxed atmosphere for the leaders of the two states to exchange views on things they cannot otherwise formally discuss in formal meetings and they are tools for trust building. India deliberately went for informal setting knowing that China does not have acquiescence in this kind of diplomacy. However, the two states, through their diplomats, do announce the core points of understanding achieved during the summit. The two sides have decided to institutionalise this concept into an 'Annual Summit' from 2020 onwards.

## WHY WUHAN AND THEN CHENNAI SUMMITS?

The 2018 summit was significant as it happened in the backdrop of the Doklam crisis. But there were other factors. The US has unleashed a trade war on China. Xi felt that the confrontationist approach with the US would dent Chinese economy, so Xi looked at India as a possible balance in the trade war. Secondly, Modi in India was not keen to enter into the last year of his tenure with 2019 polls with a 'Doklam hangover', thus Wuhan. The summit was planned to resolve differences between the two sides so that both could respect each other's concerns, aspirations and sensitivities so that the two can rebuild the 'trust' and avoid rubbing against each other and prevent friction that can touch off a fire. The 2019 summit was a continuation of the positive energy generated at Wuhan and happened in the backdrop of differences in Kashmir (over abrogation of Article 370) and Indian military exercise in Arunachal. The 2019 summit happened in Mamallapuram. Chinese Buddhist monk Xuanzang had visited Kanchipuram during the Pallava dynasty. Bodhidharma, who spread Zen Buddhism to China, had set sail from the coast of Tamil Nadu and landed in present-day Guangdong (Canton) province. There was a major trade link between the Pallava and Chola kingdoms of south India with the southeast coast of China, particularly the province of Fujian and city of Quanzhou. The discovery of coins and potteries of China's Song dynasty are a testimony to that. Mahamallapuram is regarded as the city of Mamalla or Narsimhavarman-I of the Pallava Dynasty. It is the same site where 63 years earlier, Zhou Enlai and Ho Loung had visited in 1956. Mahamallapuram and China also have the oldest security pact on earth. In the 8th century, the Chinese sought help from the Pallava king Rajasimhan to counter Tibet, which had emerged as a strong power and a threat to China.

## ANATOMY OF INDIA'S RESET OF CHINA POLICY AND WHY INDIA WENT FOR WUHAN AND CHENNAI

The reason for the summit was no doubt to diffuse the tensions, which had emerged because of Doklam crisis and Kashmir crisis but there exists three deeper logics. Today, in Indian strategic community, there is an understanding that conflict and any adversarial relationship with China will not be beneficial for India. Secondly, a consensus also exists that no external power is also interested to deflect China from its forays in Indian Ocean or India's neighbourhood. Thirdly, there is a belief that any acrimony between India and China only gives leverage to Pakistan to shape Chinese South Asia policy, which will be detrimental to India. Not only that, but India has also seen that the US and Japan too wish to maintain their ties with China, despite verbal conflicts. At one place the US has unleashed a trade war on China and simultaneously is engaging with China over de-nuclearisation of North Korea. Even Japan, which has a USD 300 billion trade with China, has asserted that it will engage with China on a 'case by case' basis for the BRI.



## THE WARMTH AND CHEMISTRY AND THE MUTUAL INTEREST IN SERENITY IN WUHAN AND CHENNAI

1. The two sides decided to provide strategic communication at the highest level. This strategic communication is needed to identify vistas of cooperation in overlapping regional and global interests.
2. There shall be strategic guidance to the forces on the ground level between the militaries (to build trust and understanding) to facilitate flow of constant communication to avoid crisis in future by prudently managing differences with mutual sensitivity.
3. To reduce the trade deficit, the two sides decided to enhance cooperation in boosting agricultural and pharmaceutical exports.
4. To bridge the trust deficit and induce a spirit of positive cooperative competition, the two identified to undertake joint economic projects in Afghanistan. This is based on the understanding that overall geopolitical stability is crucial for economic growth. This led to the birth of an idea called the 'Two Plus One' format (an integrated approach for trilateral development), where Two are India and China and Plus one envisaged is Afghanistan (which as a model can be in future extended to Africa as China has been asserting that India and China are 'like-minded partners' in Africa).
5. At the international level, the two decided to sync their efforts on multilateral issues like climate change and seek reforms of international institutions that affect developing states.
6. The two decided to cooperate in resolving the irritants like Indian membership to NSG.
7. A new strategic objective was agreed upon which included the early settlement of the border issue.
8. The Indian side asserted that China has adhered to (in Chennai) the 'Political Parameters and the Guiding Principles' signed between the two in 2005. This is important here because in the 2005 agreement, India made claims to disputed areas in the Eastern sector of the border.
9. The leaders have decided to "brighten up each other" by learning from each other how they can realise the true potential of two great ancient civilisations.

The core points of understanding at Wuhan and Chennai can be summarised into five words—shared vision, better communication, strong relationship, shared thought process and shared resolve. In the Wuhan Summit, to build people-to-people ties, the two have emphasised on STRENGTH—Spirituality, Tradition, Trade and technology, Relationship, Entertainment, Nature conservation, Games, Tourism and Health and healing. The Indian Prime Minister gave five principles of Soch, Sampark, Sahyog, Sankalp and Sapne.

## ANALYSIS OF WUHAN AND CHENNAI AND IMPLICATIONS ON BILATERAL RELATIONS

The summit level diplomacy is a new feature of the 20th century. The advent of travel through airlines allows meetings can be planned at a short notice (as Wuhan). Secondly, the mass media making a spectacle of such summits for domestic political constituencies is another factor for such meets. In case of India and China, it is worth noting, that the first such summit happened in 1954 between Nehru and Zhou Enlai, at a time when China did not even have an aircraft to fly its leader. Eventually, an Air India plane brought Zhou to India for the summit in Delhi. Today, China has built an alternative domestic passenger aircraft, in competition to Boeing and airbus. In this changed ground realities, we need to look at the Wuhan Summit. At a time when the two have been distrustful of each other due to the bruising caused by Doklam standoff, the Wuhan Summit can be seen as an attempt to achieve entente cordiale between India and China. The summit ensured that the two sides comeback to the negotiating table even though they had no prefixed agenda of negotiation. This also means that such an informal meet was relevant for domestic messaging as well, which otherwise would have given domestic Indian opposition parties the chance to assert 'failed China policy' to the electorate. More important is that this time in Chennai, there was mention of 'our common interests outweigh our differences', which is different from 'our commonalities outweigh our difference' as always in the past. There was however no mention of any measures to reduce the tensions between the two to CPEC, proving that tension between India and China still runs 'along the spine of

Asia'. The distrust still remains. India still views Chinese 'encroachments' into its neighbourhood and Indian Ocean as an upfront challenge to Indian authority, while China views deepening of India's ties with the US and Japan as a challenge to its security. But a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.

Dimension	Border	Terrorism	Economy	Disputes	Strategic communication
Wuhan (2018)	Asked Special Representatives to intensify border settlement	Opposed terror of all forms and decided to cooperate	Promote bilateral trade and explore complementarities	Promote peace and stability in times of global uncertainty	Advocated the concept of strategic guidance and strategic communication
Chennai (2019)	Respect political parameters and guiding principles agreed in 2005	Decided for 'Joint Efforts' to strengthen global framework on terror	High Level Mechanism for Trade and Economic Cooperation created for mutual investments	Reiterated Astana Commitment of 2017 that difference should not become disputes	India formally adopted strategic communication and leader driven mechanism. The two have decided a sea voyage as part of 70 activities to celebrate 70 years of diplomatic ties.

## INDIA AND CHINA: WATER WAR NARRATIVE AND CHINESE STRATEGY OF HYDRO-HEGEMONY

Water covers almost 71% of the earth's surface. Yet, only 3% of that water is potable, out of which 2% is held in glaciers and ice caps. Even this percentage is rapidly shrinking due to growing human population, increased economic activity and rapid pollution. When increase in population is read together with demands arising from prevalent consumption patterns, it presents a bleak future scenario. It has been projected that two out of three people in the world will live in water-stressed conditions by the year 2030. The indispensability of water combined with scarcity creates a fertile breeding ground for potential conflict. The fact that rivers, which are an important source of fresh water, do not follow political boundaries and are more often than not trans-boundary in nature makes the situation more complex. In this context, it becomes imperative to explore the unique advantage China has as a complete upper riparian power. China's bid to achieve water security as well as ambitions to establish itself as a hydro-hegemon in the region, through the case of mighty Yarlung Tsangpo/Brahmaputra River, especially focusing on the implications for India. Asia comprises 60% of the world's population (4.4 billion in 2016) and also has the highest growth rate today, with its population almost quadrupling during the 20th century.

The upper and lower riparian nations often make incompatible claims about their rights over river waters. The upper riparian nations base their claim on the principle of 'absolute territorial sovereignty', meaning the right to use the river waters unilaterally regardless of lower riparian concerns. This is often called the Harmon Doctrine. According to this doctrine, an upstream nation can freely utilise a river's flow within its boundaries without considering the effect on a downstream state. The lower riparian states, on the other hand, base their claims on 'absolute territorial integrity', which argues that upper riparian actions should not affect the water flowing downstream. China has been seen to act in a manner typical of an upper riparian nation. Its distinctive position as a completely upper riparian nation allows it to act as a hydro-hegemon in the region. China's hydro-hegemony is made possible by its control over Tibet. The Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau extends over a vast area spanning 2.5 million square kilometres. This Plateau, often referred to as the 'third pole' and 'roof of the world', is home to the largest fresh water reserves outside north and south poles. It is the source of some of the Asia's most important river systems including the Indus, Ganga, Brahmaputra, Irrawady, Salween, Mekong, Yangtze and Huang He. All these rivers are trans-boundary in nature, with the exception of Yangtze and Huang He. As per the estimates of the Chinese ministry of water resources, the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) has 448.2 billion cubic metres of water, which is strategically important since it gives China an enormous edge over India in terms of control over water resources. Chinese scientists have discovered that Tibet has 40,000 times more water resources than China. The Chinese occupation of Tibet, wherein the most important rivers originate, *de facto* assures China's hydro hegemony. The *de jure* control over water resources is aided by the fact that China has made huge investments in dams and has not entered into any water



sharing agreement with India. China is no stranger to massive dam projects. The Three Gorges Dam on Yangtze River is by far the biggest in the world. However, unlike the Three Gorges Dam, where impact is restricted to areas within China, the several dam projects on Yarlung Tsangpo assumes significance since India (as well as Bangladesh further down) are directly affected and have to bear externalities emanating from it. The Yarlung Tsangpo enters India after passing the Great Bend, through Arunachal Pradesh where it is known as Siang/Dihang, then onto Assam where it is called Brahmaputra, and thereafter to Bangladesh where it is named Jamuna. China completed the Zangmu Dam (510 MW capacity) built on the upper reaches of Brahmaputra in 2010. Three more dams at Dagu (640 MW), Jiacha (320 MW) and Jiexu are at present under construction in 2020. The work on Zam hydropower station, which will be the largest dam on Brahmaputra, too commenced in 2015. Although the Indian allegations about Chinese dam building activities on Brahmaputra date back to more than a decade, Beijing admitted to the construction of Zangmu Dam only in 2010 and that too after a series of denials. China has not yet officially communicated anything about the construction of the other three dams—Dagu, Liacha and Jiexu—on Brahmaputra. Lack of communication by China has created an atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust in India, especially in its Northeastern region. China seems to have chosen a policy of absolute sovereignty rather than one of national integrity over shared water resources (where states have the right not to be negatively affected by activities of upper-riparian countries). China has been repeatedly invited to participate in multilateral consultations by downstream states comprising the Mekong River Commission (MRC), which it has refused to join. Chinese reluctance to participate in MRC could be attributed to growing water scarcity within the country and the possibility of similar demands by other downstream states. However, back in 2010, a severe drought in the country had pushed China to participate in MRC discussions and data sharing. China has also been reluctant to ratify the 1997 UN Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses that provides a framework for multilateral cooperation on water. Article 11 of this UN Convention mentions the need for states to share information regarding use of international watercourses. Articles 21 and 23 elaborate on pollution, prevention and protection of the marine environment. China believes that the Convention does not adequately consider the interests of upstream states. India too has not ratified it probably because the Convention has no force over non-party countries such as China. Geopolitical and strategic imperatives do not justify a state becoming a party to the Convention unless other states with trans-boundary water associations also become parties. China had refused to sign and ratify the Helsinki Rules too. In 1966, a codification of the principles of international law relating to trans-boundary water resources was completed through the International Law Association's (ILA) Helsinki Rules on the Uses of the Waters of International Rivers. The gist of the Helsinki Rules is that each state within an international drainage basin has the right to a reasonable and equitable part of the beneficial use of the basin waters. The two basic principles can be briefly summed up as reasonable usage and an obligation to do no harm. However, the enforceability of the Helsinki Rules is undermined by the ILA's status as an unofficial organisation. Thus, these resolutions cannot be legally binding in international law unless they are adopted in the form of a multilateral convention or followed by states as state practice. The Chinese decision to build more and more dams on Yarlung/Brahmaputra and continued evasiveness on its long-term plans, the number and kind of dams it intends to build, has been an issue of major concern for India. China, on its part, insists that the dams are and will continue to be run-of-river projects, wherein water will be returned to the river after use. As such there ought to be no fears of diversion, hoarding, and release of water later. The Indian Government has taken this claim with a pinch of salt. Government, in close cooperation with various State Governments including Government of Assam, which are users of the waters of river Brahmaputra, continues to carefully monitor the water flow in river Brahmaputra for early detection of abnormality so that corrective and preventive measures are taken to safeguard livelihood of peoples of these States of Union of India. What further adds to India's concerns is that these dams are large enough to be converted and used as storage dams, especially if the purpose is flood control and irrigation (as is the case with Zangmu Dam). In the absence of a water treaty, China depriving India of water during lean seasons becomes a possibility. Chinese hydropower projects could convert Brahmaputra into a seasonal river implying water scarcity in India. Another risk is the release of floodwaters during the monsoon season, which could inundate the already flooded Brahmaputra river basin in Assam. There is much apprehension that the Brahmaputra may lose the silt, which makes the plains in its basin fertile, because of sediment trapping in the dams.

Additionally, all hydropower projects, particularly around the Great Bend, are located in a highly volatile tectonic zone. Their proximity to known geological fault lines, where Indian Plate collides with the Eurasian Plate, makes them extremely earthquake-prone. In building its dams, China has also polluted its rivers. The disruptions of natural flood cycles of the river have adversely affected the rich geo-environmental and biophysical settings in India's Northeast. China has priority

rights since it was the first to build dams on Yarlung Tsangpo. By building dams especially near the Great Bend, after which the river flows into India through Arunachal Pradesh, China could be seeking to leverage its position over the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh. Around the time China started working on this dam project, India too decided to commence construction of 14 hydropower projects in Arunachal Pradesh, most of which were located lower down on Brahmaputra. This might be viewed as India's effort to establish its 'lower riparian right' to counter China's first use priority rights. The idea might be to ensure a strong bargaining position to detract China from building hydel projects on the river's upper reaches. However, except for one project, all other projects are currently stuck due to lack of necessary environmental clearance. The only project cleared so far is the 2000 MW Lower Subansiri hydroelectric power project, which too is languishing due to scarcity of funds. Some experts have pointed out that the volume of precipitation varies across the Brahmaputra sub-basin substantially. It receives primarily two types of precipitation, rainfall and snowfall. In this respect, the Tibetan part of the basin along the stretch of Yarlung, being located on the northern aspect of the Himalayas, receives much less rainfall as compared to the southern part of the basin, that is, the stretches in India and Bangladesh. The total annual outflow of Yarlung from China is about 31 billion cubic metres (BCM), while the annual flow of Brahmaputra at Bahadurabad, the gauging station near the end of the sub-basin in Bangladesh, is 606 BCM. Around 80% of the flows of Brahmaputra emerge within the Indian boundary. According to some Indian experts, the Brahmaputra gets mightier as it flows downstream because of the flow contribution of tributaries such as Dibang, Lohit and Subansiri. In terms of sediment flow, the flow volume and discharge is not sufficient to generate and transport the large sediment load that is characteristic of Brahmaputra downstream. Despite China having 50% spatial share of this 3,000 km-long water system, low precipitation and desert conditions mean that Tibet generates only 25% of its total basin discharge, while India, with 34% of the basin, contributes to 39% of the total discharge. This refutes the thinking that the flow of a river is proportional to its expanse within the country. Even then, the fact that intentional flooding and degradation of water upstream remain serious issues of concern for India cannot be summarily dismissed. As of now, there is no institutionalised mechanism on water cooperation between India and China. China has signed no such treaty with India or any of its neighbours and continues to act in a unilateral manner in the region. However, in 2002, India and China had entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) wherein China agreed to share hydrological information about Yarlung Tsangpo (Brahmaputra) including its discharge at Nugesha, Yangcun and Nuxia stations from June 01 to October 15 every year. This was helpful in the formulation of flood forecasts by the Central Water Commission. When this provision ended in 2007, it was renewed for another five years. In 2006, a Joint Expert Level Mechanism was set up between the two countries in order to exchange hydrological information and ensure a smooth transmission of flood season hydrological data. In 2013, this provision was renewed with the change that 2014 onward sharing of data would take place twice a day from May 15 to October 15. However, China had refused to share hydrological data during the Doklam standoff. Although hydrological data sharing resumed in 2018, the Doklam face-off showed how China could use water for political leverage. By refusing to share data which is crucial for flood control and planning during the monsoon period in India, China demonstrated that it is not averse to using water as a political weapon to control and force compliance on its downstream neighbours. Any forward movement on ensuring hydro security in the Brahmaputra basin would require a long-term understanding between the two countries. India's hydro-diplomacy thus faces the daunting challenge of engaging China in a sustained dialogue and securing a water sharing treaty that serves the interests of both the countries. To meet its surging energy demand, China itself seeks to utilise its huge hydropower potential of the Brahmaputra but on other hand, China has to maintain a stable relation with India and Bangladesh. Therefore, China follows the desecuritisation policy to deal with the water sharing conflicts. Desecuritisation refers to the process of "moving issues off the security agenda and back into the realm of political discourse and normal political dispute and accommodation. Desecuritisation is therefore about 'turning threats into challenges and security into politics' China's desecuritisation moves have primarily been of a reactive and short-term nature. Whenever there are concerns raised about the Chinese activities on the upstream of the river, Beijing resorts to a volley of rhetorical comments.

## CORE IRRITANTS BETWEEN DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS OF INDIA AND CHINA

History is alone not the biggest reason for India and China to be where they are. Had history been the sole factor, today the world would have been Dar-ul-Harb (House of war). There have new sources of frictions in the 21st century, but history is obviously one of the factors, not the sole one.



1. Unresolved border between India and China
2. Regular border standoffs and incursions at the borders
3. The strategic American shift to Indo-Pacific that makes China uncomfortable
4. Revival of Quad by the US and attempts to position it as an Asian NATO
5. 'Deep Pocket' diplomacy of China in India's neighbourhood
6. Differences at international for Indian membership to the NSG and permanent membership at UNSC
7. Chinese contests Dalai Lama and his presence in India
8. Lack of transparency on water sharing by China, especially the rivers in East
9. Sowa-Rigpa, a traditional form of medicine in Himalayas is a newly emerging source of friction as both India and China strive to seek its enlisting at UNESCO as intangible cultural heritage
10. Rising trade deficit apart from the existing trust deficit

### **AREA OF FUTURE COLLABORATION-1: DEMOGRAPHY AND URBANISATION**

India is witnessing a massive rise in its population whereas the population growth in China has slowed down, due to the One-Child policy adopted. However, both the states continue to witness population growth. The growth of the population directly impacts the urbanisation. In India, the urbanisation problem is more because of rise of urban population, whereas, in China it is more due to induced migration. Despite the differences, the problems caused by urbanisation ranging from slums, traffic congestion, sanitation, housing pressures and pollution, are common to both. This provides an incentive to collaborate. The first factor is to learn from the other how are they solving the problem? This requires experts to open up a channel of communication. Secondly, both can evolve an indigenous home grown strategy to solve these challenges that can eventually present a new alternative to the existing 'western' paradigm. Collectively, the states in the future can become a harbinger for change and development in other developing states.

### **AREA OF FUTURE COLLABORATION-2: HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH**

The quantifiable data suggests that India and China are the two topmost fastest growing economies in the world. But, there is a catch. The two also have a low performance on human development indices. This proves that growth and development have not been commensurate in the two states. This is surprising because globally states that have expanded economic growth have also widened and improved on developmental indicators. This means that India and China are part of their own league where they differ from the global practices. This itself is a condition for collaboration where the sides can strive to understand why the human development indices have not improved despite both witnessing higher trajectories of growth. They can then strive to find a common ground to collectively improve their human development indices as well.

### **AREA OF FUTURE COLLABORATION-3: MEDIA AS A TRUST BUILDER**

Despite the fact that in the last two decades the two sides have witnessed higher trade, one factor that plagues the relationship is 'trust deficit'. This is historical and has been deep rooted in the Indian psyche since the 1962 military conflict. On top of this, the media in the two states has often played a role in only strengthening this deep bilateral suspicion. In 2010, when the Chinese premier visited India, he urged the media in India to play a more constructive role in positioning a more positive image of China including on issues that are sensitive like the border issues. Despite pragmatism to move forward diplomatically (starkly visible in Wuhan Summit 2018 and Chennai in 2019), the clouded suspicion will remain an irritant. This provides an area of collaboration. The state-owned medias of the two states could take the lead. They can start having regular programs consisting of experts from both the states. These programmes can discuss various themes of bilateral cooperation and can play a positive role in addressing the 'trust deficit'. This will have a spillover effect and jointly with diplomatic pragmatism, can help the two states to change the psyche of the people.

## AREA OF FUTURE COLLABORATION-4: CIVILISATIONAL POWER

The two states are civilisational powers. They have connected histories. However, the people to people engagement remain the lowest. This is one important pillar of collaboration. In the Wuhan and Chennai summits, India asserted the need to strengthen civilisational ties through cultural exchanges, sports, yoga and films. The two sides can jointly cooperate to emerge as spiritual world powers and redefine the concept of international power, which till today is dominated by pure military power only.

## AREA OF FUTURE COLLABORATION-5: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

India is creating massive infrastructure. This ranges from highways to rail infrastructure to developing sustainable agriculture. China has investment liquidity and it can invest in Indian infrastructure projects. Secondly, to mitigate rural-urban disparity. India is focusing on enhancing agricultural productivity. This is one area where China can again be of direct help to India. As India is a pioneer in services while China in goods manufacturing, this is a potential area of high cooperation. India can try to deepen its 'Make in India' programme through a deep collaboration with China and through experts learn how China became a manufacturing powerhouse. China can do the same in services. This directly opens up a new area of joint cooperation, energy. This takes the two states to deepen their cooperation further in climate change. Both India and China can explore joint collaboration in development of shale gas. The shale is available in Tarain, Tuha, Sichuan and Ordos in China, while Godavari, Krishna and Cauvery in India.

## AREA OF FUTURE COLLABORATION-6: SECURED ENVIRONMENT FOR BECOMING GLOBAL POWERS

India and China today face common three common threats of extremism, terrorism and radicalisation. If China witnesses them in Xinjiang, India witnesses the same in Kashmir. Even though the two sides have different views on the three threats as India believes Pakistan to be the factor causing the three while China not, the two sides can develop a common understanding on these threats. This can enable the two to further explore possibilities of joint cooperation in the Indian Ocean as well.

## INDIA'S OPTIONS ON MANAGING CHINA: PLAYING A ZERO-DIM-SUM GAME

*Be Patient, Be inscrutable, be Deceptive and keep your plans unfathomable*

Just as nature abhors vacuum, same way, the international politics abhors an imbalance of power. This statement by Kenneth Waltz, further states that when a state faces hegemonic threats, it can either increase its own power, ally with another power to restore the power balance or jump on hegemon's bandwagon. Keeping this in mind, India has to articulate a strategy on how it will manage a two front war if it occurs.

## GIVE THE CHINESE A 'BLOODY NOSE'

The famous poet Maya Angelou rightly said, 'when someone shows you who they are, believe them'. Nations empower their militaries to deter war, and should they fail, fight to win wars. India's approach has to be firm and the country has to display a resolve to protect its territorial sovereignty. By displaying a firm resolve against China, India, which is not even under the US security umbrella can demonstrate to kill two birds with one stone. India is trying to resolve the matter via talks. The best way to resolve the matter is via talks only but if Chinese do not happen to retreat the occupied lands, then a military solution cannot be imposed on them owing to technological, military and economic asymmetries between the two, but, India can give the Chinese a 'bloody nose' in select locations if the matters aggravate.

## GO FOR BOUNCING-IN APPROACH

If talks fail and Chinese refuse to retreat, then India can resort to the strategy of "bouncing-in" where India can use air power and boats on the Pangong Lake beyond Finger-4 and occupy the territories claimed by India. In case of Ladakh, the



Chinese may have the advantage of mobilising their troops faster as they have better infrastructure, but, the Indian side has better experience of mountain warfare, both in terms of skills and quality of human resources. The Mountain Strike Corps (MSC) and India's Special Frontier Force (a covert operation arm of RAW) will provide India the required deterrence and enable India to launch defensive operations if necessary to forcibly evict the Chinese from the Indian Territory they are occupying. Manmohan Singh and George Bush had developed a tacit understanding that if Chinese ever resort to a violent threat against India, then, the US would provide India with air support.

## **CHOKER THE CHINESE IN WATERS**

If any military response by India snowballs into an all-out war with China and if Pakistan happens to open a second front, then India can always open up the dreaded maritime frontier for China and use Indian Navy to choke the sea routes crucial to Chinese.

## **WORKING MECHANISM FOR CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION ON BORDER AFFAIRS**

However, to avoid such violent clashes as one happened in Galwan Valley in 2020, it is imperative for India and China to conclude Comprehensive Border Management Engagement Agreement between Indian Army and Chinese PLA which shall subsume all established mechanisms of confidence building, border personnel meetings, meetings of the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on Border Affairs (WMCC) and other diplomatic channels. When a disease is not cured permanently, any temporary palliatives do not work. This statement reiterates the fact that the long-term wisdom lies in permanently demarcating the LAC. If the situation persists, India can play five cards.

## **INDIA'S INTERNATIONAL OUTREACH**

As part of a global campaign to tackle an expansionist China, India should expand Malabar and has rightly added Australia, join the Five Eyes Network and ban Huawei to access Indian market and 5G services.

## **HONG KONG CARD AND TAIWAN CARD**

India till now has avoided any comments on internal situation of Hong Kong. However, if Chinese tactics continue, then India can try to support the US in siding with the aspirations of youngsters of Hong Kong (who are anti-China) at the domestic and international level. As explained in the chapter ahead, India can rightly use the Taiwan card by deepening economic and strategic ties.

## **INDIA'S XINJIANG CARD**

India till now has refrained from commenting upon the human rights violations in Xinjiang regionally and internationally, despite the Chinese supporting the Pakistanis on human right violations in Kashmir. India can always leverage its deep relations, economic and strategic, with the Gulf to isolate China on blatant human rights violations on Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang.

## **INDIA'S TIBET CARD**

India, being sensitive to the Chinese concerns, has always allowed Dalai Lama to remain confined to religious and spiritual activities only. But, India can always leverage Dalai Lama by encouraging him to do political activities on behalf of the Tibetan people if needed. India can try to assist Dalai Lama in grooming his successor. In 1999, when Jiang Zemin, the then Chinese premier visited the Swiss Parliament, he was greeted with pro-Tibetan protestors. The Chinese Premier became so angry with this that he commented, "Swiss have lost a good friend". This is what Indian Prime Minister and Indian establishment can do, by displaying solidarity with Dalai Lama and communicate to the Chinese, "You have lost a

good friend" (read India here). Maybe, India can try to open up the Historical Division in the MEA, which was shut down in the 1990s, to enable its officers and bureaucracy to learn what Chinese have done in their past.

## DO MORE TRADE WITH CHINA TO MANAGE CHINA

At a time when emotional sentiment in India is against China and also trying to promote boycott Chinese goods; let us prove that how more trade with China can actually hurt them more. My suggestion here is let China do more business with India. Instead of being concerned that China will exploit the weak situation of Indian businesses hit due to COVID-19 and acquire stakes in Indian firms, it would be better if Indian government liberalises the FDI rules and actually allow the Chinese to take up such stakes. The Chinese corporate sector is controlled and financed by the Chinese government. So, if China invests in India, it effectively means money is of Chinese government in India. Such investment will increase interdependence between India and China. As the economic interdependence grows, India will happen to yield more leverage over the Chinese firms. How is that possible? In 1970s, when the Chinese began to open up their economy, the US was over willing to help Chinese acquire stakes in American businesses. Over a period of time, the economies of China and the US became so integrated and interdependent that today, the Americans have the right levers to arm-twist the Chinese because economically they enjoy a symbiotic relation. The core driver of the ongoing the US and China confrontation is seen here. The Americans have so much of economic leverage over China that they can ruin the Chinese firms like ZTE by denying them components made in the USA. This has the potential to hurt the 5G ambition of Huawei and break the Chinese monopoly in global telecom, which is their strategy to achieve superpower status. While most of the international relations theorists may be busy articulating the decline of the US and rise of global Chinese power, the US intelligence community knows that this leverage with America is only possible today because the US cleverly articulated to create this intricate interdependence while no such linkage was possible in the early years of the Cold War because the US and Chinese were de-linked. This is a real lesson for India. Rather than being jingoistic about seeking a military revenge with Chinese, it should encourage Chinese businesses and leverage economic diplomacy because economy triumphs military in case of China and Nehru was a live proof. This is where another argument is made that India should shed off its inhibitions, face a domestic loss for a short run, join the RCEP and hurt China economically by siding with like-minded powers like Australia and New Zealand that aim to teach Chinese a lesson for the global and regional mess ranging from COVID-19 to assertion in the South China Sea.

## RESURRECT INDIAN FRONTIER ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICE

In the 1950s, to manage NEFA, the government pilot Indian Frontier Administrative Service (IFAS), which consisted of a bag of officers from Indian Foreign Service, Indian Administrative service and Indian Police Service, who were rotated and sent to tribal areas of NEFA. The government also created a separate desk in MEA for NEFA to spur its development. The IFAS made a lot of recommendations to spur up the border infrastructure. The IFAS was wound up in 1968 and Border Roads Organisation and Indian Army today do its role. There is a need to revive the idea of IFAS once again in the wake of recent border activities. In 2019, the governments of Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram had written to the Central government that resurrecting the IFAS can rectify the neglect of frontier today by the Union.

## POSTSCRIPT AND IGO: INDIA'S NEW GAME

While the leaders change and tactics may also change, but strategies and doctrines are embedded in the culture and mindset of a nation and they are far better predictors of their actions. For China and India, both have a rich culture and several texts explain the mindsets of the two states but an easier way to explain the difference is to study the strategy games of the two nations. In China, they play a game called "igo". This game is similar to the Indian chess and is played on a board with 19 x 19 sides with 361 points, unlike 64 in chess. The difference from chess is that in igo, the stones, black and white, are positioned in this manner that they deny liberty to the stones of the opponents. The game is not played like chess, where the objective is to capture the king, but to surround a large area of the board by own stones and deny the opponent to do the same. The game is designed in this manner that the players build positions with stones to map out larger formations and territories. Whenever there is an opposing formation, it leads to expansion of number of stones, capture of number



of stones or reduction and loss of stones also. The winner is the person who has the maximum captured territory and the highest number of captured stones. For long, the Chinese have been playing igo and not chess with Indians and is being played by the Chinese on a multi-dimensional canvas, bigger than the Indian landmass and at various spectrums that range from economic, military to that of blocking Indian liberty and manoeuvrability. While at one place China has coaxed the inveigled neighbours of India into one camp, on the other hand, it has penetrated deep into India's infrastructure, from health to economic to technological value chains, to this extent that India finds it difficult to disengage its dependence from China meaningfully. The western and southern neighbours of India have been made into surrogate pincers by China that beautifully ties down a large part of Indian military assets and strategic mindshare. In Mandarin, the word igo means encircle and Chinese, through their stones called Belt and Road Initiative, String of Pearls, have constricted Indian manoeuvrability from every direction. It is this encirclement India needs to break and it cannot be broken internally alone. India must cooperate with Japan, Australia, Taiwan, Malaysia, South Korea, Singapore and Vietnam which, are increasingly threatened by China's hegemonistic moves and should strive to expand the 'board'. This will require India to think like a Go player and appreciate that unlike chess, the stones in Go do not possess any relative power. This requires India to divorce its national security from politics and enable long-term indigenous capacity building and strengthening of external alliances. Even though Mao said that political power may grow from a barrel of a gun, but national power emanates from a strong and vibrant economy. This requires internal peace, cooperation, and harmony to inspire confidence in the customer and investor.

# SECTION 5

## INDIA'S RELATIONSHIP WITH CENTRAL ASIA

- 1. The Strategic Importance of Central Asia in Global Politics
- 2. Chinese Foray into Central Asia: Concerns for Indian Foreign Policy
- 3. The SCO: Aims, Objectives and Importance for India's Foreign Policy
- 4. India's Relations with Central Asia: Regaining Strategic and Security Centrality
- 5. India's Hunt for Energy, Commerce and Connectivity with Central Asia

### AN OVERVIEW

In 2001, the UPSC asked a question on strategic and economic importance of Central Asian countries for India. In 2002, there was a question on the opportunities and bottlenecks India faces while engaging with these countries. In 2018, the commission asked a question on what role could India play in Central Asia where other countries had entrenched themselves and this had to be analysed with reference to Ashgabat Agreement.

**Potential foresight** We should note that the UPSC's pattern of asking questions on Central Asia is block-centric and not bilateral. This implies that the commission is not interested in asking any bilateral questions with individual Central Asian Republics but wants to assess one's general understanding on how we engage with the region. Keeping this in mind, we can infer that the foresight should be strategic significance of Central Asia for India. This is said so because India has reconnected with Central Asia again with the coming of Taliban in Afghanistan. Also, in the past, the UPSC has asked questions on economic importance and bottlenecks, the strategic and security significance emerge as potential areas for the future. Keeping that in mind, this chapter will equip one with relevant knowledge needed to answer such questions.





# 1

## CHAPTER

# The Strategic Importance of Central Asia in Global Politics

### THE REGION RE-EXAMINED FROM ANCIENT TIMES TO NEW GREAT GAME AND POWER DILEMMAS

#### Significance of Ancient Silk Route

Silk Route indicates an ancient trade network that was established during the rule of Han Chinese Dynasty and was used for commercial trade from 130 BC to 1453 AD. Apart from trade in silk and other commodities, the route was renowned for spread of cultural, religious and philosophical ideas that helped nations along the route to develop civilisational synchronisation.

India's relationship with Central Asia goes back to 2500 years old historical connection. The ancient Indian texts do mention about the challenges that India had to confront from nations that existed beyond the Himalayas and Hindu Kush. However, the links between India and Central Asia have remained uninterrupted since the time of Sakas or Indo-Scythians. In fact, the Sakas, Yavanas, Kambojas, Pahlavas and Pardas have all come from Central Asia and have been successfully absorbed in the Jat and Kshatriya communities in India. The great trade route, known as *Uttarpath*, that connected the Indo-Gangetic plains with Eurasia has been frequently mentioned in multiple ancient Indian texts. The ancient texts also frequently mention how Central Asia had remained the biggest artery for spread of culture, religion and philosophy. In fact, the famous silk route in the ancient times was less about silk and more about the cultural diffusion of Buddhism and Hinduism. The ancient Indian texts have also highlighted the security and strategic importance of Central Asia for India. This has been highlighted in Mahabharata and other Pali texts where Central Asia has been referred to as a region bringing relentless security threats to Indian land frontiers on the northwest boundary. In fact, all military ventures over land into India, from Greeks, Turks to Mughals, have come from the steppes region of Central Asia. The security threats from Central Asia did not subside in medieval times

and Genghis Khan, who emerged from the Fergana valley came to create a havoc in India.

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Babur established the Mughal rule and its origin lies in Central Asia. In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the British and Russians were involved in great game in the region and this great game phenomena brought the strategic importance of East Turkistan and Afghanistan into the minds of Indian leaders. After the World War I, the region of Central Asia was brought under the imperial control of Soviet Union (which was established after the Russian Revolution in 1917). The Soviet Union, throughout the Cold War, exercised deep influence over the five countries that constituted the block of Central Asia. The strategic establishment in India perceived the Soviet presence in Central Asia during Cold War as a positive outcome and this was a point of comfort for India. Since the end of Cold War, Russia has considered India as an important player in region of Eurasia and Central Asia and this has been exemplified with the fact that Russia has supported India to be a part of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

The region of Central Asia is seen in Indian history textbooks as a region that has significantly contributed in developing India's strategic thought. The region of Central Asia is looked through the security prism but Central Asians have been viewed in India with immense fondness. Since the time of globalisation, the view of the globe of Central Asia has changed. The withdrawal of Soviet Union in the post-Cold War period has been seen as a contributory factor, the energy resources available with Central Asians have made them strategic in the eyes of many nations. With its proximity towards Afghanistan and presence of enormous resources, the Central Asia is seen as a region where a great power rivalry is again unfolding, but in the domain of energy and security and this is often known as 'New Great Game' by strategic scholars. Russia, after re-emerging from the ashes of end of Cold War, has tried to revive its presence and hold over Central Asia by creation of Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) and Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). The main contestant in the region is China. The Chinese economy has been propelling and is in dire need of resources from Central Asia. The geographical proximity with Central Asia has compelled China to turn every challenge with Central Asia into an opportunity. Chinese had border disputes with Central Asians after the end of Cold War. The Chinese, who are reluctant to solve the border issue with India, displayed an extraordinary zeal in solving the disputes with Central Asian. In 1996, the Chinese conceptualised Shanghai-5, a regional grouping of China and Central Asia, to resolve the boundary issue and once the border issue was solved, the Shanghai-5 was transformed into SCO. The creation of SCO is an attempt by the Chinese to offer the republics of Central Asia with security so that Chinese have no security concerns while undertaking resource trade with Central Asians. In recent times, the Chinese have invested heavily by creating roads, infrastructure and rail projects to connect Central Asia and China, which has facilitated the trade of oil, gas and uranium. The Russians have not objected to Chinese forays into the region because the Russians have continued to support the dictators in Central Asia. The Chinese and Russians, with their autocratic rules, have found comfort in engaging with Central Asians.

## THE US, CHINA, RUSSIA IN CENTRAL ASIA

The US has seen the region only as a support and logistical hub for its operations in Afghanistan. The US has understood its own limitations that it cannot venture into Central Asia where Russia and China have established deep inroads and have treated the region as their own strategic and commercial backyard. The US is, however, concerned about China and Russia trying to 'impose' their will on Central Asians. This 'imposition' is seen by the US with Russia conceptualising EEU and Chinese focusing on SCO. The US has become more insecure seeing that through EEU and SCO, the Russians and Chinese are trying to institutionalise their presence and strategic depth in the region. Politically, the Russians, since the Cold War, have tried to nurture the dictators in the region of Central Asia. These dictators have, since the end of Cold War, continued their engagement with Russia and China. In order to counter the Russians and Chinese, the US is often seen supporting the Islamists in the countries of Central Asia. This is why in recent times, the countries of Central Asia are witnessing political instability because the US-backed Islamists are insisting on establishing the ties of Central Asians with rulers in the Middle-East, a region where the US exercises considerable influence over the Sunni states. The US believes that the only way it can weaken the presence of Russia and China in Central Asia is by supporting Islamists in the long-run. This support will create internal political chaos in Central Asia and as a result,

### What is the New Great Game?

The Central Asia, owing to its geographic location between East and West, has now emerged as a region witnessing geoeconomic and geopolitical competition. The search for strategic space by the US, Russia's unwillingness to leave its historical strategic legacy, Chinese attempt to penetrate the economic space in Central Asia without challenging Russia and India-Iran and Afghanistan forays into the region to create their own strategic spaces for regional cooperation has created a renewed thrust for new strategic and regional rivalry, which often is known as new great game.

### What is the SCO?

It is a transcontinental, permanent, inter-governmental organisation created on 15 June 2001 by China with members of Central Asia and Russia to maintain mutual trust amongst neighbours, promote cultural, trade, political, scientific and technological cooperation so that there is peace, security and stability in the region, which shall manifest in the future as a new template of international political and economic order.



the Central Asian states will remain in internal conflicts, thus preventing the rise of EEU and strengthening of the SCO as a potential security provider. The Central Asians have deterred any attempts by Turkey, Pakistan and Arab states to impose their versions of Islam in their countries because these variations of Islam, backed by the US, are seen as sources of instability in the region and go against the quest for regional stability and commerce which all Central Asians strive for. It is in this backdrop that the strategic community of India also understands that the much talked about thought of 'Islamic Fundamentalism' in Central Asia is a hype and has no relevance for Central Asia as the region also sees the 'Islam under threat' theory as a myth. The main objective of US policy is to use Islamists to win energy contracts in Central Asia and thereby reduce and neutralise the attempt of Russia to sell gas and oil to Europe. The Russians have time and again thwarted the attempts of the Americans and Central Asians have been convinced to sell their oil and gas to Asia than to Europe. Such a tactic also ensures that Russia continues to be the main supplier of oil and gas to Europe whereas the Central Asians become suppliers to China and Asia. The American options of using Central Asia to emerge as new suppliers of oil and gas to Europe are also limited by their own isolationist policies with Iran, uneasy relationship with Taliban and Pakistan in recent times. This has compelled the Central Asians also to not explore any regions and have been forced to accept the designs of Russia. This has not gone down well with the countries of Central Asia because they believe that since the end of Cold War, the Russians have prevented the Central Asians to assert their own independence in thoughts and actions of foreign policy. Russia under the leadership of Putin has seen Central Asia as a region where Russia will remain the key player in designing the destiny of Eurasia. This thinking of Putin has led Russia to defeat the 'Third New Force' in Central Asia, which is visualised as a secret society in connivance with West trying to seek the ruin of Russia. This is why the Russian actions in Central Asia today are not ideologically driven but driven with a goal to keep the West out of a region which has been a strategic lake of Russia. This explains why Russians have never seen Cold War also as an ideological struggle but have seen the fight with the West as a fight of Atlanticism and Eurasia. This explains why Russian historians have viewed the Cold War as 'a stage of great war of continents'. For Russia, Central Asia is a zone to assert the 'Eurasian capitalism' model as a counter to 'American capitalism' model. This thinking of Russia explains why Central Asia is seen as an important sophisticated block in tactful clash of Russia with the West. The Russians in early 2000s did not have the resources to counter these threats on their own. They welcomed the US and even supported them to use Central Asia as base territories to launch counter-offences against the extremists. In this sense, the American presence in the region close to strategic space of Russia was actually seen as a net-gain by the Russians and what really the Russians lost was ego. The Russians decided that under the drastically altered security environment post-9/11, it is better to live with a lesser ego, considering that it is transitory and will help Russia bounce back in the long-term. The Central Asians engaged with the US under the war on terrorism by establishing Central Asian Cooperation Organisation (CACO) in 2001. The logic that drove Central Asians to embrace the West in post-9/11 scenario was that if you need peace, you must prepare for war. They found that engagement with West would free the region from the clutches of terrorism and subsequently, foreign investment would flow into Central Asia. To ensure that Central Asia does not completely slip into the embrace of West, Putin played his cards in post-9/11 period in Central Asia. Putin started making forays into oil, gas, defence and mineral industries of Central Asia when the US was busy fighting Taliban and Al-Qaeda. This enabled Russia to develop long-term economic and defence presence in the region yet again and Russia began to re-assert itself as a dominant power in Central Asia, with a motive to steer away Central Asia from the embrace of West. In this context, Russia unveiled CSTO in 2003 that transformed Central Asian republics and Russia into a military alliance to drive away aggression. Russia now allowed the member states to serve into Russian armed forces, a novelty that was warmly welcomed by the republics of Central Asia as the youth found this as an interesting military employment opportunity. The creation of SCO has enabled Russia and China to establish a permanent security architecture in the region that has neutralised the West completely, especially at the security level. The entire region of Central Asia is witnessing acute ecological crisis because of depletion of its water reserves. In this backdrop, Russia has positioned itself as the core supplier of this basic necessity to the Central Asians, thus cementing Russian altruistic and development narrative in the minds of locals. In this backdrop, the US trying to make a renewed push for an entry into Central Asia. It conceptualised C5 + 1 Dialogue process in 2015 in Central Asia with the US as the core driver. The US is now driving the C5 + 1 initiative to visualise security, economic connectivity and trade projects with Central Asia. In this backdrop of rapidly changing

political, strategic and commercial discourses within Central Asia, the Indian strategic community has evolved its own strategy. India is not only aggressively trying to re-establish a connection with the region to revive the historical and civilisational connectivity, but is looking to revive strategic relationship with modern content. The full membership of India in the SCO is now India's launch pad for engagement with Central Asia.





# 2

## CHAPTER

# Chinese Foray into Central Asia: Concerns for Indian Foreign Policy

### THE ENTRY OF DRAGON IN CENTRAL ASIA

When the Cold War ended, Chinese were very cautious in engaging with Central Asia. They knew that the region was an erstwhile territory of Soviet Union. However, the Chinese were able to see that at the end of Cold War, Russia did not have adequate economic and military muscle to prevent Chinese to fill the vacuum they left. The Chinese responded with aggression and launched a mega diplomatic initiative to cultivate ties with Central Asians. Initially, the Chinese were again concerned that how would the Central Asians react to Uighurs in Xinjiang province. The Chinese were suppressing the Uighur uprisings in Xinjiang and they knew that the suppression of Uighurs could be perceived negatively by the Central Asians because the Uighurs were of Central Asian descent. However, the Chinese were quite surprised to see that the Central Asians did not condemn the Chinese suppression of the Uighurs because the Central Asians knew that Uighurs were restive people and their uprisings could act as hurdles to the Central Asian dream of global engagement after they were free from the shackles of Cold War. In this backdrop, the leaders of Central Asia and Chinese leaders found a new point of security convergence and the Central Asian leaders decided to cooperate with the Chinese to keep the Uighurs in check. When the Chinese decided to impose bans on separatist movements in Xinjiang, the Central Asians supported the bans because they knew that separatism by Uighurs could have implications on ambitions of Central Asia. The Chinese were quick to wrap the new design of security cooperation with Central Asians with elements of trade, commerce and connectivity. Sensing rising opportunities, the Central Asians decided to cooperate with the Chinese in economic diplomacy because they found this dynamic commercial cooperation a shield to counterbalance any potential Russian or Islamic interference in their internal affairs. The Central Asians were also enthusiastic in engaging with the Chinese because this engagement gave high-spirits of independence in thinking and decision-making, something which was curtailed since 1925 when the Central Asians were under the control of Soviet Union. The Central Asians now emerged a new laboratory for the Chinese to experiment post-Cold War border negotiations and use the successful resolutions as templates to claim its responsible power status. However, it is important to note that the Chinese had many other motives in mind while resolving boundary issues with the Central Asians. After the disintegration of Soviet Union, the Chinese worried that the new Central Asian republics could become a new playground of Western powers and that would bring the West at the doorsteps of China. This is something the Chinese dreaded and this is why they decided to step into the shoes left by Russians. Secondly, the rising instances of instability in Afghanistan, Pakistan and terrorism in Kashmir in the 1990s was seen by Chinese as a security threat to their western frontiers. In this backdrop, the Chinese were clear that they had to secure their western periphery from extremism externally and separatism internally (by Uighurs, as explained previously). Thirdly, the Chinese were aware of that leaving Central Asia without a power dominance would leave space for either Russia or the US to resort to subversion within Chinese territory and that would be counterproductive for territorial integrity of China. The fact that the US could support the Uighur separatists to break Chinese was a threat that loomed large on Chinese security planners. So, the Chinese adopted a clear cut strategy to engage with Central Asia. They decided that keeping Central Asia stable would largely be in sync with the security and stability of western China. Secondly, they realised that any endeavour of the Chinese in Central Asia would elicit a Russian counter response. Thus, to mitigate a counter response



from Russia where it might feel Chinese foray as an attempt to gain strategic presence in Russian strategic backyard, the Chinese decided to go for economic diplomacy.

## THE THICKEST PIECE OF CAKE GIVEN TO MODERN CHINA BY HEAVEN

Chinese immediately designed a 'Go-West Policy'. The idea was to engage economically with Central Asia and make the region dependent upon China. The Go-West policy was a beautiful blend of incentives and coercion where economic incentives were provided to the countries of Central Asia in the realm of trade and commerce and in return these economic incentives were designed in a way that they would have sufficient heft in muting Central Asian response on Chinese management of Uighur separatism. In this way, the Chinese succeeded in not only bringing the Central Asians within the galactical economic orbit of China but also forestalled any potential support of Central Asians to Uighur separatists in Xinxiang. The border negotiations were designed by the Chinese in a manner that enthused the Central Asians while symbolically benefitting Chinese. They even made border negotiations in some cases intertwined with multi-million dollar trade and commerce projects so that the newly independent republics could be lured to close the border deals in return for upcoming economic benefits. The Chinese decided to bury their ego and were willing to accept territorial losses till the time the Central Asians were given adequate confidence that negotiations on border and engagement with Chinese were in their interest. The entire approach of the Chinese explained here was managed through the Chinese initiative known as Shanghai-5, which it conceptualised in 1996. The core driver of the entire Chinese diplomacy was to make sure that their forays neither elicit response from Russia nor invoke suspicion in any Western power. Some argue that the Shanghai-5 was a quick invasion by Chinese into the region of Central Asia, which enabled the Chinese to glide the relationship to strategic levels under the SCO. The Chinese were able to achieve all their objectives set in Shanghai-5 by the end of 1990s. When the world entered the dynamism of the 21st century, now was the turn of China to add strategic element to the newfound relationship with Central Asia. At the onset of the 21st century, the strategic planners in China analysed the strategic interests in Central Asia. They realised that Central Asia is strategically important because it is critical for Chinese energy security, territorial security, trade and commerce, ethnic balancing and military defence. The core driver that bound all these interests of China were economic resources and it is in this context General Liu Yazhou of People's Liberation Army of China stated that Central Asia is the thickest piece of cake given to modern China by heaven. Through a package of skilful diplomacy and economic inducements, the Chinese have been successful in breaking Russian economic monopoly over Central Asia. The Chinese have aggressively opened mandarin speaking institutes in multiple locations of Central Asia to ensure that they train the next generation Central Asians for future jobs in China. The fact that Russia, under Putin, is more busy in establishing 'Russian World' as a counter-challenger to the West has allowed Beijing more space in Central Asia.

## WHEN CHINA SPITS, WE DROWN: THE CENTRAL ASIAN DISDAIN OF CHINA

The above discussion from the Chinese perspective makes it clear that Chinese have succeeded in achieving every stated objective. However, it is equally interesting to know that the Chinese are hated and disdained beyond limits in Central Asia. This is so because the Central Asians are historically conscious people and they know that in the past, the Chinese have always looked at Central Asians as vassal states. They know that a day is not far when the Chinese will display similar disdainful thinking again. There is a popular old saying that dominates Central Asia today that 'if Russian bridle is made of horse leather, the Chinese is made of iron' and 'when a black Chinese comes, a yellow Russian will appear to be farther'. Ablai Khan succinctly captured the disdain Central Asians have for Chinese when he stated that 'when China spits, we drown'. The people of Central Asia are willing to cooperate with the Chinese, but they are equally cautious of Chinese lebensraum designs. Despite all economic cooperation and security cooperation under the SCO, the Chinese have not succeeded in erasing the historical insults that Central Asia are still haunted by. The Central Asian states clearly know that there are limits to their Uighur policy. This is so because the local populations are sympathetic to Uighurs, whom they perceive as people of Central Asian descent. The leaders of Central Asia know that in future, the possibility of an armed confrontation with the Chinese on Uighur issue is imminent. The Chinese are also encouraging as many Uighurs to migrate to Central Asia as possible because this is in sync with the Chinese policy to alter demography of Xinxiang by influx of Han Chinese. However, what the Chinese are not able to grasp is that if these Uighurs go to Central Asia, then



the Western powers are likely to use these Uighurs to carry out subversion on the western flank of China, thus nullifying all objectives that Chinese have intended to achieve till date. This is why the Central Asians are in a dilemma today. The dilemma is that they love Russians and Indians but can live without them and the economic dependency that Chinese have created in Central Asia is such that even if the Central Asians dislike the Chinese to their core, they cannot live without them. Under the new silk route gambit, as part of the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the Chinese have strategically outsmarted the Americans. What the US could not achieve by grand strategy in Central Asia, the Chinese have achieved through capital markets. From Central Asia, under the BRI, the Chinese plan to go all the way till Europe and in Poland, Belarus and Ukraine, it intends to carry out commercial farming; thus, cementing their strategic presence all the way deep in Europe. Hence, one thing is clear from the analysis that the strategy of China is not just a game of resource exploitation, it is of copying the game of Western imperialism in the world, step by step and the BRI is a process actualising the same for the Chinese.

## **SNAP INSPECTIONS IN CENTRAL MILITARY DISTRICTS AND RUSSIAN REBOUND IN CENTRAL ASIA**

The Russians have been playing a different ball game in Central Asia. They have been using the vast swathes of land in Central Asia to carry out military drills. While these military drills are done to prepare Russians for launching full-scale offensive operations against Ukraine and other flashpoints in Europe where Russia is likely to come in confrontation with the West; the Central Asians seem to be mute in allowing their lands to be used by Russians for such snap inspections. Russians have always argued that snap inspections in Central Asia, which involve mass level military drills with a combination of air and ground power, are conceptualised to create self-sustaining strategic operational forces and ensure strategic mobility capabilities for Russian troops. These snap operations, as interpreted by strategic communities in Asia and India, are Russian strategies to prepare for any offensive with West in Central Asia. The Russian operations in Central Asia are an indicators to the West in particular and China tacitly that Russia will resort to use of instruments of national power to defend its strategic backyard of Central Asia. Russian operations are driven with certain concerns. Firstly, Russia is trying to display military prowess and send a message to the West that they will not tolerate any regime changes in Central Asia. Secondly, Russia is also trying to convey that they will use military means, if required, to safeguard ethnic Russians in the region defined by Russia as 'Near Abroad', which stretches from Ukraine to Central Asia. Thirdly and importantly, the Russians are giving a message to the Chinese that they will not accept any attempts of China to thwart Russian ambition of EEU. The Russian intervention in Ukraine in 2014, 2022 and its game in Crimea has actually emerged as a blueprint for Central Asians that to what extent Russia is willing to intervene if their interests are harmed. However, Russia has time and again asserted that its intervention in Ukraine in 2022 is to protect the interests of ethnic Russians. These Russian interventions, more specifically the war in Ukraine in 2022, have increased the fears amongst Central Asians that they are susceptible to regime changes from external quarters. Collectively, there are more than 10 million ethnic Russians living in Central Asia and fears of Russian operations loom large in Kazakhstan, in particular, which has highest chunk of Russian ethnic communities, where they fear that they could be next Ukraine. The problem is aggravated by the fact that many Central Asian nations have territorial claims in each other's territories and they fear that in case Russia starts salami slicing, as it did in East Ukraine in 2022, then other nations of Central Asia will start raking up the claims and this would eventually lead to balkanisation of Central Asia. The question that arises here is that what does this Russian reassertion mean for India? India is greatly concerned about the rising resurgence of Russia and militarisation of the region because it has looked at Central Asia through the prism of energy and economic resources. The biggest dilemma that confronts the strategic community of India is that if Central Asia descends into any chaos, it will have serious security implications on India's western front. The chaos will also affect India's economic rise and prevent India to have access to resources from the region of Central Asia, which it perceives as India's extended neighbourhood.